

## King tours Grand Mosque site in Oman

MUSCAT (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein, accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad, the King's personal representative, on Sunday visited Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque building site here and was briefed by the project engineer on the stages of construction of the mosque and its annexes. Construction on this 300,000-square-metre mosque project commenced in 1995. The mosque, which is being built on an 800,000-square-metre plot of land, includes an assembly hall, a library, an institute for Islamic sciences, a student housing and a public garden. The mosque itself can accommodate 5,000 worshippers, while the mosque and its annexes can accommodate 16,000 worshippers.

# Jordan Times

An independent political daily published by the Jordanian Press Foundation  
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراي

## Regent salutes Yemen's democracy

AMMAN (Agencies) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan congratulated Sunday Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh on last week's successful parliamentary elections in his country. In a cable to the president, Prince Hassan said, "Having followed up on your intensive efforts to lay down the pillars of democracy and to adopt it as a life style in your country, I have the pleasure to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you and to your country for this great achievement." Prince Hassan said Yemen's democratic achievement reflects the resolve and determination of the Yemeni leadership and the genuine desire by the Yemeni people to foster democratic practices, and to strengthen Yemen's unity.

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# Israel, Turkey launch combined political offensive against Syria

## Syria is preparing for military option — Israeli general

By Ramzi E. Khoury  
with agency dispatches

IN WHAT appears to be the beginning of a major political offensive against Syria, Israel and the secularist faction in Turkey's fragile government coalition have joined forces to publicise "the dangers" of Syria's military arsenal and weapons, linking the Arab state to Iran at a time when the latter is facing a major international offensive on charges of "sponsoring terrorism."

In the latest of a series of hostile statements made by Israeli officials, a senior Israeli military intelligence officer claimed Sunday that Syria is drawing up plans for a "military option" against the Jewish state.

Israeli army radio quoted General Amos Gilad, head of strategic studies for military intelligence, as saying that "Syria is really preparing a military option and the Israeli army must take this into account."

"We are not on the eve of Yom Kippur," Gen. Gilad said in reference to the Arab-Israeli war which began on the Jewish holiday in October 1973, "but the Syrians are preparing a military option which could become a reality."

Gen. Gilad reportedly made his remarks during a meeting of senior reserve officers in Tel Aviv on Friday.

The military chiefs-of-staff, General Amnon Shashak, stressed that under the current defence budget, the army does not have sufficient means to prepare for a war. Israel would not be reacting as it is now if it knew that a war was going to break out in a year, Gen. Shashak added.

Israeli cabinet secretary, Danny Naveh, said Sunday that Israel "does not have

intelligence on what concrete and immediate steps Syria can take to engage in a war."

"We know that for years Syria has been preparing a military option," Mr. Naveh added.

Deputy Ehud Barak, the favourite to succeed Shimon Peres as leader of the opposition Labour Party, said he supports Gen. Shashak's demands, made earlier, for extending the budget to prepare the military for war. "We don't have sufficient stocks of arms and ammunition," the former military chiefs-of-staff said.

"From the moment the peace process stopped, the countdown for a confrontation began," Mr. Barak added.

Foreign Minister David Levy warned Syria Friday against a chemical-weapon attack on Israel. Syria would pay a high price for a chemical arms attack against Israel and only bring about its own destruction, Mr. Levy said.

Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai accused Syria of developing a poison gas called VX to arm its surface-to-surface missiles.

He was reacting to an Israeli newspaper report on Syrian development of the gas, which is extremely dangerous to the lungs and skin.

Syrian President Hafez Al Assad said Thursday that his country will part with its chemical and biological weapons when Israel gets rid of its nuclear arms.

"Those who have nuclear arms don't have the right to criticise others who have other types of weapons," he said at a press conference after a meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm Al Sheikh.



European Union Middle East envoy Miguel Angel Moratinos, on the right, greets Foreign Minister David Levy as he arrives for a meeting at the foreign ministry, on Sunday (Reuters photo)

"If they (the Israelis) want a disarmament, they can begin with the nuclear weapons," Mr. Assad said.

Israel has never admitted to possessing nuclear arms. But foreign military experts say it probably has 150 to 200 atomic bombs, some of which could be adapted for use on medium- and long-range targets.

The Israeli political offensive followed radical statements made by Turkish officials last week.

On Wednesday, Turkish Defence Minister Turhan Tayan told Turkish reporters in Tel Aviv: "Syria is the headquarters of terrorism hitting both Turkey and Israel, and Iran also supports such terrorism," according to Turkey's Anatolia news agency.

Mr. Tayan on Friday ended a three-day visit to Israel with a meeting with

## Peace drums beating in Syria — Moratinos

TEL AVIV (AP) — Returning from Damascus, the European Union's special envoy to the Middle East said Sunday that Syria's president, Hafez Al Assad, was fully committed to restarting peace talks.

Miguel Moratinos, the former Spanish ambassador to Israel, brought no specific message from the Syrian leader with whom he met for three hours.

Speaking to reporters, Mr. Moratinos dismissed Israeli press reports that the drums of war were sounding from Damascus, saying he believed there was a "drum of peace" beating in Damascus.

"They are fully committed to relaunching the peace process with Israel," he said after meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy.

Israel-Syria negotiations were suspended in February 1996, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has refused Syria's demand for a commitment to withdraw from the Golan Heights as a prelude to restarting talks.

Mr. Moratinos also defended Europe's involvement in the Arab-Israeli peace process, saying it did not conflict with America's role.

"I have to respond to those circles who said that the EU role is counterproductive," Mr. Moratinos said. "We work closely with the United States in a complementary way."

Mr. Netanyahu has in the past criticised European involvement in the peace process, saying the United

## Jordan, Qatar demand Israel comply with peace accords

DOHA (Agencies) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Abdullah Ben Khalifa Al Thani held talks here Sunday and condemned Israel's settlement policy in Arab East Jerusalem.

"The two parties reiterated their rejection of Israel's settlement policy in Jerusalem and the occupied Arab territories and demanded that Israel implement the peace agreements signed as part of the peace process," the Qatari News Agency (QNA) said.

They also underlined "the need for an equitable, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on the international resolutions."

Concerning the bilateral relations between the two states, Qatar welcomes the

opportunity of expanding its cooperation with Jordan in the fields of energy, information, higher education and the employment of skilled Jordanian manpower.

Qatar's Emir Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani said here on Sunday.

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutaweh, who is accompanying Dr. Majali on the trip, quoted the Qatari emir as saying that Qatar considers its relations with Jordan unique and that the two countries complement each other.

Dr. Mutaweh, who spoke to the press after the meeting, said Dr. Majali conveyed a message to the emir from His Majesty King Hussein on issues of common concern and told the Qatari ruler that Jordan was ready to provide Qatar

with Jordanian expertise to help the country establish a faculty of medicine at Qatar's university.

Dr. Mutaweh said that the two sides reviewed Jordanian-Qatari protocols on cooperation in trade, energy, information, labour, higher education, and other fields and discussed a mechanism for the implementation of these protocols.

He said the respective labour ministries in the two countries worked out an executive programme for providing Qatar with qualified Jordanian manpower to be employed in specific areas which require their services.

Dr. Majali is accompanied on the visit to Qatar by the ministers of labour, information, and energy and mineral resources.



## Prince Ghazi engaged

MUSCAT (Petra) — The Royal Court Sunday announced the engagement of His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, the cultural secretary of His Majesty King Hussein, to Her Royal Highness Princess Arji, daughter of Sultan Qaboos's Special Adviser Omar Abdul Munim Zawawi. Attending the engagement ceremony were His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad, the personal representative of King Hussein, Their Royal Highnesses Princesses Abdullah and Ali. Royal Court Chief Awn Khawaneh, His Royal Highness Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, the Director of the National Security Council, Prince Zeid Ben Ra'd, the King's Adviser for Tribal Affairs Lieutenant General Hmeid Al Fayez, Royal Court Imam Ahmad Hleil and Jordanian Ambassador to Oman Mohammad Qudah as well as the Zawawi family members.

## King affirms Jordan-Egypt ties

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday described Jordanian-Egyptian relations as strong and called for continued coordination and cooperation for the advancement of both countries.

"I believe that coordination between Jordan and Egypt is a model to be followed by others. We always discuss our relations and the Arab situation, particularly the peace process, in a brotherly manner which, I think, is the only means towards prosperity and development of our two countries. Jordan and Egypt always review the means of integration in all fields," His Majesty said.

And in reply to a question on the peace process in the Middle East region, the King said: "There should be consultations and coordination among Arabs in order to safeguard solidarity and support our Palestinian

brothers in their quest for a peace."

King Hussein congratulated Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on his birthday and wished him continued good health, a happy life and the Egyptian people more progress and development in an interview with Sawt Al Arab Radio.

King Hussein urged the United States to resume its vital role to restart peace-making in the region. "The United States can play a major role in the Middle East peace process in addition to the efforts by Russia, the co-sponsor of the Madrid Peace Conference, and the European Union," His Majesty said.

His Majesty expressed his hopes that these efforts would be complementary to those of the United States.

His Majesty also said "We should not let the minority on both peace camps dictate their agenda upon us."

## Arab League voices high hopes for British Labour

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul Meguid expressed hope Sunday that new British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his government will work to serve Arab interests.

"The Blair government will exert an important influence toward serving Arab causes, especially in recovering Arabs' rights, in the peace process and calling for its resumption on the basis of trading land-for-peace," he said.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat appealed Sunday to Mr. Blair to help save the Middle East peace

process, which broke down after Israel began work on a new Jewish settlement project in Arab East Jerusalem on March 18.

Mr. Meguid also told reporters that he hoped the Lockerbie affair, which pits Libya against Britain and the United States, will be peacefully resolved during Mr. Blair's term in office.

International sanctions were imposed on Libya after it refused to extradite to Britain or the United States two Libyans suspected of involvement in the bombing of a Pan Am air-

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## Algerian president claims victory over 'terrorists' hours after bombs kill 15

PARIS (R) — Two car bombs killed 15 people and wounded 23 in hotels in a thermal resort in northwest Algeria at the weekend, the Algerian newspaper Le Matin said on Sunday.

The newspaper said the bombs exploded 10 minutes apart in Sidi Bouhanifia, about 325 kilometres from the capital, Algiers.

"The two blasts killed 15 people and wounded 23, including a child, badly hurt in the head and whose hand was blown off," the paper said.

It added that the blast was so powerful that "according to a medical source half those killed could not be identified."

One bomb hit the Sahara Hotel destroying the building. A second, outside the Hotel Al Farah, caused widespread damage, the newspaper said.

There was no claim of responsibility for the attack but the authorities have blamed Islamist rebels for hundreds of bombs and other attacks over the past five years.

The attack was carried out just hours before Algerian President Liamine Zeroual, addressing his first popular

rally since his election in 1995, said on Saturday his government has won over Islamist rebels.

"The terrorism in our country has lost the war thanks to the courage and sacrifices of our people and its security forces," said Mr. Zeroual using the official term "terrorism" to describe Islamist guerrillas who have been fighting to topple the government.

Mr. Zeroual, whose speech was broadcast by state-run radio, said the rebels "are criminals who have no relation with the people and with the Muslim faith. They are criminals who cut the throats of babies, women and innocent citizens."

"The state respects its commitment to exterminate those criminals and traitorous who are taking their revenge on the people by slaughtering innocent people," he vowed.

"The state has the firm determination to restore the peace and the stability in the country," said Mr. Zeroual speaking at a popular gathering in the southern town of Ghardaia, 470 km south of Algiers.

Mr. Zeroual said the parliamentary election to be held on June 5 would be another

"political victory" on the path to establish a multiparty democracy in Algeria.

About 8,000 candidates, including government ministers and Mr. Zeroual's aides, are running for the National Assembly's 380 seats. Islamist parties are banned by the new constitution approved last November.

President Zeroual warned people against what he called demagogic election promises.

"The economic reforms are necessary to ensure the future of our sons and our country," he said, adding that more reforms lay ahead including in the industrial sector.

Algeria's industrial output, excluding oil and gas, fell seven per cent in 1996.

Algeria has been torn by violence since shortly after the military authorities in January 1992 cancelled a general election in which an Islamist party had taken a commanding lead.

Over 60,000 people have been killed in political violence since then and the bloodshed has continued despite repeated government claims of victory over the rebels.

## Israel reverses action to revoke 186 Arab residency documents

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's Interior Ministry said Sunday it had reversed its decision to revoke the residency permits of 186 Palestinian residents who live in East Jerusalem.

The ministry initially revoked the residency permits of 1,017 Palestinians since January, telling them they were no longer eligible to live in Jerusalem. Following appeals, the decision was reversed in 186 cases and more than 400 other cases are being reexamined, the ministry said.

The ministry's announcement followed reports that in a goodwill gesture to help restart the Israel-Palestinian peace talks, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will make efforts to ensure that Palestinian residents of Jerusalem don't lose their right to live in the city.

It was the first time the ministry has released figures of the number of permits revoked.

In 1996, a total of 689 Palestinians lost their rights

to live in Jerusalem, the ministry said.

Palestinians and human rights activists have accused the Netanyahu government of deliberately revoking the residency rights of hundreds of Palestinians in Jerusalem in order to strengthen Israel's grip on the disputed city.

Under Israeli law, Palestinian residents of Jerusalem who don't become Israeli citizens and who move outside the city — even to the West Bank — can have their residency permits revoked.

Human rights groups have said Mr. Netanyahu's government has been enforcing the policy far more aggressively than its predecessors in an effort to secure Israel's sovereignty over Arab East Jerusalem, which the Palestinians claim as their capital.

Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, which Israel captured in 1967, are eligible to become Israeli citizens — but most do not because they do not recognise Israel's annexation of the city.

## Jordan, Israel inaugurate Baqoura Peace Park Tuesday; Beilin due to push his plan

By Tareq Jabbour  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A Jordanian-Israeli meeting will be held on Tuesday in Baqoura on the fringes of an inauguration ceremony for a joint peace park established to commemorate the death of seven Israeli schoolgirls, an Israeli diplomat said Sunday.

The spokesman for the Israeli embassy in Amman, Shalom Tourgeman, said the level of the meeting has not been decided yet, but he added that Israeli Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu might attend the ceremony.

"Talks are underway now between the two sides to finalise the arrangements of the inauguration ceremony, and by Monday everything will be clear on who is going to attend from the Israeli side," Mr. Tourgeman said.

The inauguration of the peace park is to commemorate the seven Israeli schoolgirls who were killed by a Jordanian soldier, Ahmad Musa Dakamseh in Baqoura. Dakamseh is still

under army detention pending his trial by a military court.

Mr. Netanyahu's possible visit will coincide with a regional tour by U.S. special envoy to the Middle East Dennis Ross who is scheduled to arrive in Tel Aviv on Monday in a new endeavour to reach a breakthrough in the two-month-old stalled peace process.

The American envoy failed in a similar trip last month to bring the Palestinians and the Israelis back

(Continued on page 2)



## Fire bombs hurled at Turkish consulate in East Jerusalem

'Three Palestinians of Armenian descent arrested'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinians threw fire bombs at the Turkish consulate in East Jerusalem on Sunday ahead of the Turkish deputy chief of staff's arrival in Israel to discuss weapons purchases, police said.

Three Palestinians were arrested for allegedly throwing the Molotov cocktails at the front yard of the consulate and at the consul's car, an Israeli police spokesman said.

No one was injured but the vehicle sustained minor damage.

Israel Radio said the three Palestinians were of Armenian descent.

General Cevik Bir, deputy chief of the Turkish general staff, began talks Sunday with top Israeli military officials on cooperation and the

possible purchase of several weapons systems from the Jewish state.

Gen. Bir is accompanied by a large group of defence industry officials.

Senior U.S. military officials will for the first time join the next round of strategic military talks between Israel and Turkey due to be held in Tel Aviv on Monday, Israel Radio reported last week.

David Ivry, secretary-general at the Israeli defence ministry, and Gen. Bir will represent their respective countries at the talks.

Gen. Bir's visit to Israel comes only two days after Turkish Defence Minister Turhan Tayan wrapped up a trip to the Jewish state, which included talks with Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai.

After several decades of dormant relations, Turkey and Israel boosted their ties to a strategic level last year, signing two key pacts on military and defence industry cooperation despite protests by Arab states and Iran.

In the largest scale business deal under the defence industry treaty, the two countries last year signed a \$630 million contract for the modernisation of Turkey's fleet of ageing F-4E fighter bombers by Israel.

Israel also wants to upgrade Turkey's U.S.-made M60 tanks and a possible sale of Israel's Phalcon early warning aircraft systems and Popeye air-to-sur-

face missiles to the Turkish air force is also under consideration, Turkish sources said.

Trips by Mr. Tayan and Gen. Bir were preceded by an April visit by Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy to Ankara and a February visit by the chief of the Turkish general staff, General Ismail Hakkı Karadayi, to Tel Aviv.

Sources from both countries said Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai would pay a fresh visit to the Turkish capital in late May.

"Military cooperation between Israel and Turkey must be stepped up to confront the threat of terrorism and to ensure the stability of the region," Mr. Netanyahu said on Friday after talks with Tayan.

## Jordan awaits request from U.S. to shelter Abu Marzouk — Tarawneh

AMMAN (R) — Jordan's Foreign Minister Faysal Al Tarawneh said on Sunday his government was still waiting for the United States to request formally that it give shelter to a jailed political leader of Hamas.

Dr. Tarawneh said Jordan, which expelled former Hamas politburo chief Musa Abu Marzouk two years ago under pressure from Washington, Israel and the Palestinians, would not let Mr. Abu Marzouk back without an explicit U.S. request.

"There should be a written request. I think it will (come) very soon," he told journalists.

Mr. Abu Marzouk, accused by Israel of responsibility for a wave of

attacks in which scores of Israelis died, was arrested in New York a few weeks after his expulsion from Jordan in 1995. He was jailed while Israel sought his extradition, but was not charged.

Security officials said in February that Israel, fearing a wave of violence if he were extradited to an Israeli prison, would drop its demand for Mr. Abu Marzouk's extradition in return for a pledge by him to shun violence.

Jordan said last week King Hussein would allow him to return "without any obligations" other than abiding by Jordanian law.

"It is unconditional. It is a deportation not an extradition. We are not taking him into custody," Dr. Tarawneh

said, adding that Mr. Abu Marzouk could return to Jordan next week.

"The information that I have is that he will come within four or five days. But the exact time — the United States didn't even tell his family," Hamas representative in Jordan Mohammad Nazzari said.

"He will not sign any conditions," Mr. Nazzari added. Hamas officials have said Mr. Abu Marzouk would play a "leading role" in the organisation if he returned to Amman.

Mr. Abu Marzouk has maintained throughout his detention that he was only involved in political activities while in Amman.

Suicide bombers from the military wing of Hamas, which rejects Palestinian

President Yasser Arafat's self-rule deal with Israel as a sell-out, killed dozens of Israelis in a series of attacks year ago.

Jordan, which has in the past had uneasy relations with Mr. Arafat, appeared to have distanced itself from Hamas and moved more solidly behind the Palestinian leader after the expulsion of Mr. Abu Marzouk.

But last month Jordan's Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali met Amman-based Hamas politburo chief Khaled Meshal, who took over from Mr. Abu Marzouk after his imprisonment, in what Hamas said was the highest level meeting for over two years.

## Leaders of Mideast churches urge world Christians, Muslims to protect Jerusalem

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Leaders of the Middle East's Christian Churches called for cooperation between Muslims and Christians and denounced Saturday an end to "Israeli violations in Jerusalem."

The meeting of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) was chaired by Pope Shenouda III, leader of Egypt's six million Coptic Christians. The MECC was established in 1974 to bring together the region's Orthodox, Coptic, Assyrian, Anglican, Protestant and Catholic churches.

The MECC underlined the urgency of unifying church positions and said that "Christians and Muslims are labouring together for a common future."

The council, in a commu-

iqué issued after its two-day meeting, also called on "Christians and Muslims in the world to stop Israeli violations in Jerusalem at all levels." It was referring to Israel's recent move to build a settlement for Jews in Arab East Jerusalem.

The MECC also declared its support for the Palestinian people's right "to establish their state with Jerusalem as its capital."

"We reject any attempt to unilaterally determine the fate of Jerusalem so as to present the Muslim and Christian inhabitants of this Holy City with a fait accompli," a closing statement from the council said.

The statement also called on Muslims and Christians around the world to "raise their voices and demand an

end to violations facing Jerusalem on all levels."

The council was referring to the right-wing Israeli government's hardline policy of building a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem, a move that has brought the Middle East peace process to a standstill.

The future status of Jerusalem is due to be decided in final status peace talks scheduled to finish by May 1999.

The Palestinians want East Jerusalem, which contains Islam's third holiest site, as the capital of a future independent state while Israel insists that the whole city of Jerusalem will remain its undivided capital.

The Jewish state seized

and annexed East Jerusalem in the 1967 Middle East war.

"The participants exchanged views on the future of Jerusalem and underlined the importance of achieving a just and global peace" in the Middle East, Greek Catholic Patriarch Monsignor Maximus V Hakim told reporters.

"Arab Christians reject (Israeli) aggression and the fact that Jerusalem is becoming a museum when the Holy City is a living entity in which (Palestinian) property owners live and demand their rights," he added.

The executive of the council represents four churches: Catholic, Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox and Evangelical.

## Foreign minister stresses importance of inter-Arab relations

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Faysal Al Tarawneh Sunday met at the United Palace with Arab ambassadors and charge d'affaires accredited to Jordan and discussed with them the economic and political challenges facing the region and means of addressing them.

Dr. Tarawneh stressed the importance of enhancing inter-Arab relations, saying this issue is a top priority and a central question for the Kingdom. He called for reinvigorating them to serve

the common goals of the Arab Nation.

The minister also underlined the importance of the American and European role in the Middle East peace process.

Dr. Tarawneh said he intends to hold several periodic meetings with members of diplomatic corps accredited to Jordan with a view to maintaining constructive and meaningful dialogue with all brothers and friends around the world.

## Arab League voices high

(Continued from page 1) craft over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988.

Two hundred seventy people were killed by the explosion, Mr. Meguid said he was optimistic about the new British cabinet. "The new British government includes several officials interested in the Middle East, and in European-Arab and Anglo-Arab cooperation," such as new Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, he said.

The secretary-general said he hoped to see "the blossoming of Anglo-Arab relations."

Mr. Meguid said he wanted to see the new British cabinet "reconsider its position on this matter (Lockerbie) in a manner favourable to Arab proposals."

## Israel, Turkey launch combined

(Continued from page 1)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"Military cooperation between Israel and Turkey must be stepped up to confront the threat of terrorism and to ensure the stability of the region," Mr. Netanyahu said after his talks with Mr. Tayan.

Turkey and Israel last year signed two key pacts on military and defence industry cooperation despite protests by Arab states and Iran.

Israel Radio reported on Thursday that senior U.S. military officials would join the next round of strategic military talks between Israel and Turkey which are due to be held in Tel Aviv next week.

The latest U.S. report on international terrorism included both Iran and Syria in a list of countries backing acts of terror.

Israel has provided its new partner, Turkey, with secrets of Russian-built

Mig-29 fighter aircraft, the most advanced war planes owned by Syria, a newspaper reported Saturday.

"Israel, which recently examined three Mig-29s it had received from a friendly Western country, also gave technical details to Turkish officials as part of cooperation between the two countries against Syria," the liberal Istanbul daily Hurriyet said.

AFP reported Turkish sources earlier this week saying that Israel had received the fighters from Germany after the dissolution of East Germany at the end of the cold war.

Turkey will utilise the information on the Mig-29s to improve the electronic warfare systems mounted on its F-16 and F-4 fighters, boosting the capability of its aircraft in a possible confrontation with Syrian planes, Hurriyet said.

## Jordan, Israel inaugurate Baqoura Peace Park Tuesday

(Continued from page 1)

to the negotiating table.

Meanwhile, former Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin is due here on Tuesday where he is expected to discuss with Jordanian officials a five-point peace plan to overcome the deadlock in the peace process.

Mr. Beilin is a member of the opposition Labour Party and a candidate to the party's leadership. His visit to Jordan comes following his meeting with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat last week in the West Bank town of Nablus. Mr. Beilin attempted to convince Mr. Arafat to accept a five-point plan to bring the peace talks back on track.

His plan includes an undertaking from the Palestinians and the Israelis to refrain from all one-sided steps which contradict the Oslo accord, and which in effect would force Israel to stop all settlement building

on Arab lands to coordinate between the two sides in order to prevent violence and acts of terror, a call for an Israeli withdrawal from rural areas in the West Bank, and to fix a date for the second stage of the Israeli pullout from these areas.

The visit of Mr. Beilin, the architect of the landmark Oslo accord, is the second in less than six months. He is expected to meet with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Minister of Foreign Affairs Faysal Tarawneh, Mr. Tourgeman said.

Mr. Tourgeman added that Israel's new ambassador to Jordan Oded Eran will arrive here on Monday. Last month the government approved Mr. Eran's nomination. He succeeded Shimon Shamir, who was Israel's first ambassador to the Kingdom.

## Peace drums beating

(Continued from page 1)

States is the only one that should play the role of facilitator.

"We have little hope concerning the Europeans' effort," Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh said, adding that the European initiative could hamper U.S. diplomatic activity in the area.

David Bar-Ilan, a top aide to Mr. Netanyahu, said Sunday that the EU is biased in favor of the Arabs.

"In the case of the Palestinians, they make the connection between our freezing settlements and their stopping terrorism," he said. "This is unacceptable to us. We do not consider terrorism as a bargaining chip."

Mr. Levy, however, said

the EU "is not interfering, and they are not taking over the role of go-between. They are not acting instead of the Americans, rather they are accompanying the process. Mr. Moratinos is bringing us valuable information and is a welcome guest here."

Mr. Moratinos tried Sunday to convince a skeptical Israeli government to resume peace talks with Syria which were suspended 15 months ago.

The U.S. Middle East peace process coordinator, Dennis Ross, is expected to arrive in Jerusalem Monday to try again to revive peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

### JORDAN TELEVISION

PROGRAMME TWO

18:35 French cartoon  
19:00 Documentary — The German scene  
19:25 Deep Water Haven  
19:50 The Urban Girl  
19:50 Documentary — Extra Dimensions  
19:50 French programmes  
19:50 New Headlines  
19:55 Comedy — One First in the Game  
20:00 Documentary — Discover Magazine  
20:30 Murder She Wrote  
21:10 Highlander  
22:00 News in English  
22:25 Under Suspicion  
23:15 Middle March

### PRAYER TIMES

04:16 Fair  
05:42 Sunrise at Doha  
12:32 Dhuhr  
16:12 Asr  
19:23 Maghreb  
20:49 Isha

### CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church  
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740  
Assemblies of God Church, Tel.

### JORDAN TELEVISION

PROGRAMME TWO

18:35 French cartoon  
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12:32 Dhuhr  
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20:49 Isha

### CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church  
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740  
Assemblies of God Church, Tel.

## JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Slightly with skies partly cloudy to sunny and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be sunny, winds northerly moderate and seas calm

Min/Max. temp.

Amman 18/18

Aqaba 14/29

Deserts 07/21

Jordan Valley 12/26

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 15, Aqaba 27 Humidity

readings: Amman 87 per cent,

Aqaba 37 per cent.

### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

### NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:  
Dr. Khalil Al-Tushuq 757253  
Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 830452  
Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi 893542  
Dr. Bahjat Bader 813642  
Firas pharmacy 661912  
Ferdows pharmacy 778336  
Al-Asema pharmacy 637058  
Nairoudh pharmacy 625672  
Al Salam pharmacy 636740  
Yacoub pharmacy 644945  
Shmeisani pharmacy 657660

Najih pharmacy 847652  
IRBID:  
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh 250080  
Al Quds pharmacy 636381  
ZARQA:  
Dr. Na'el Zawadeh 544361  
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

### EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111  
Civil Defence Department 661111  
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341  
Civil Defence Emergency 199  
Rescue Police 192 621111, 637777  
Fire Brigade 617101  
Blood Bank 775121  
Highway Police 843402  
Traffic Police 896390  
Public Security Dept. 630321  
Hotel Complaints 605800  
Price Complaints 661176  
Water & Sewage Complaints 897467  
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111  
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121  
Overseas Calls 010230  
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101  
Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111  
Radio Jordan 774111  
Water Authority 680100  
J. Electricity Authority 815615  
Electric Power Co. 636381  
RJ Flight Information 08-53200  
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

### HOSPITALS

AMMAN:  
Hussein Medical Centre 81381352  
Khalifeh Maternity 64428166  
Khalifeh Maternity 64244172  
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362  
Malhas, J. Amman 636140  
Palestine, Shmeisani 697071  
Shmeisani Hospital 669131  
University Hospital 645845  
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9  
The Islamic, Abdali 66612637  
Al-Ahli, Abdali 66416446  
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3  
Al-Bashir 775111/26  
Army, Marka 891611/15  
Queen Alia Hospital 60224050  
Amal Hospital 674155  
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199  
ZARQA:  
Govt. Hospital 09/983323  
Zarqa National Hospital

09/900560  
Jbn Sina Hospital 09/986732  
Al Hilana Modern Hospital 09/990590  
IRBID:  
Princess Basma Hospital 02/275555  
Greek Catholic Hospital 02/272775  
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital 02/247100  
AQABA:  
Princess Haya Hospital 05/314111

### FOR THE TRAVELLER

### QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. 08/53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08/527001.

### ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights  
08:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
08:30 San'a (RJ)  
08:30 Damascus (RJ)

08:45 Osaka, Bangkok, Dubai (add) (RJ)  
09:35 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
10:30 New Delhi (RJ)  
10:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)  
11:05 Beirut (RJ)  
15:45 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
17:30 London (RJ)  
17:40 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)  
18:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
19:30 Bangkok (RJ)  
22:50 Lyon (add) (RJ)  
22:50 Cairo (RJ)  
00:30 Casablanca (RJ)  
04:25 Manchester (add) (RJ)  
04:40 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

### Other Flights

10:30 Cairo (MS)  
14:30 Bahrain (GF)  
15:05 Vienna (OS)  
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)  
21:30 Tel Aviv (LY)  
23:30 Athens (OA)  
01:30 Amsterdam (KL)

### DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights  
07:20 Beirut (RJ)  
10:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
11:15 Aqaba, Lyon (add) (RJ)  
12:20 Casablanca (RJ)

12:35 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)  
13:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
13:20 London (RJ)  
13:35 Frankfurt (RJ)  
16:45 Manchester (add) (RJ)  
19:00 Cairo (RJ)  
20:00 Abu Dhabi, Jakarta (add) (RJ)  
22:05 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)  
23:59 Damascus (RJ)  
00:30 San'a (RJ)  
00:45 Abu Dhabi (RJ)  
02:35 Bahrain (RJ)

### Other Flights

06:15 Istanbul (TK)  
06:20 London (BA)  
08:45 Beirut (ME)  
11:20 Cairo (MS)  
15:00 Bahrain (GF)  
15:50 Vienna (OS)  
22:50 Tel Aviv (LY)  
23:55 Damascus, Paris (AF)  
02:30 Amsterdam (KL)

### HILAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 9:00 am every Monday  
Arr. Damascus 6:00 pm every Monday  
Dep. Damascus 8:30 am every Sunday  
Arr. Amman 6:00 pm every Sunday



## Prince opens international Rotary Club meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid Sunday opened an international Rotary Club conference by paying tribute to member efforts in offering assistance for projects in social, humanitarian and voluntary fields.

Prince Ra'd addressed approximately 1,200 members of Rotary Clubs based in Egypt, Bahrain, Lebanon, Cyprus, Sudan, Jordan and Palestine, gathered at the Palace of Culture of Al Hussein Sports City.

The Prince stated that he was honoured to represent Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor at the opening session.

Thanking the Rotarians for their voluntary and humanitarian assistance to various countries of the world, includ-

ing Jordan, Prince Ra'd described these contributions as humanitarian in nature and offered in a brotherly spirit.

Referring to Rotarians work in Jordan, Prince Ra'd cited Rotary Club assistance to the needy, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, declaring such assistance as noble.

The Prince also discussed the Middle East peace process, noting that Jordan was among the leading countries, dedicating efforts to achieving a comprehensive peace based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 which call for the exchange of land for peace. The region is in vital need of extra efforts to stimulate the peace process and overcome obstacles, he said.

The Prince requested that Rotary Clubs, along with other non-governmental and voluntary institutions in the region and the world, back such efforts to help consolidate regional peace through continued humanitarian services for the benefit of present and future generations.

According to local Rotary Clubs, there are an estimated 1.2 million Rotarians affiliated with 280,000 clubs worldwide.

In Jordan, there are nine clubs in addition to Inner-Wheel Clubs for women and Rotary Act Clubs for youth, which have implemented 45 social, community and voluntary projects in the country to date.

## Training courses aim to boost women's political, economic enfranchisement

By Rana Hussein  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — With less than six months left before parliamentary elections, almost 40,000 women from eight different areas of the Kingdom will benefit from three-day training courses regarding their rights to vote and to run for Parliament, organisers said Sunday.

The training courses entitled "A Grassroots Project Promoting Women's Equal Access to Parliament Elections 1997 (Voters and Candidates)," which began yesterday, are organised by the Business and Professional Women Club (BPWC) in cooperation with the Delegation of the European Commission in Jordan and the Canadian Embassy in Amman.

President of BPWC Hind Abdul Jabbar stated that the training courses consist of awareness lectures and publications to enhance women's participation in political and democratic life in order to reach Parliament.

The training courses will discuss two main themes, according to Ms. Abdul Jabbar: targeting voters and setting a strategy for an election campaign.

The course, she maintained, will also support women candidates through consultations and media managing, as well as by managing their campaigns, holding debates and other activities to help their campaigns.

Ms. Abdul Jabbar outlined the club's activities which aim at helping women

reach decision-making positions and activating their role in public, economic, political and social arenas.

In addition, she stated that the BPWC is also working to improve women's status in all fields and encouraging them to take responsibility in society by providing awareness of the importance of human rights.

Subsequent to the opening ceremony, Canadian Ambassador to Jordan Michael Molloy told the Jordan Times that one of Canada's priorities in Jordan is to improve women's status and empower people to take control of their lives.

"Canada is a democratic country which promotes democracy and we strive to acquaint women with democratic procedures and encourage them to participate in democratic life," Mr. Molloy said.

Women politicians and activists have continuously voiced their concerns over the low turnout of women candidates and voters in the past elections of 1993 and 1989.

During the 1989 elections, all 12 women running for Parliament failed to reach their goal. This result, according to observers, led to only three women running for the 1993 elections, in which one woman, Tawaj Faisal, won a seat in the Lower House.

Women activists blamed the one-person, one-vote system, stating that it lessened women's chances of reaching Parliament and described it as "discriminatory, backwards and strengthening tribalism while contradicting civil rights and national affiliations."

Delivering a speech on behalf of Yves Gazzo, head of the Delegation of the European Commission in Jordan, Economic Counsellor Ramon Mestres described the training courses as funded under the MEDA-Democracy programme.

The programme, which was the initiative of the European Parliament, focuses on support for measures to promote democracy, rule of law, civil and socio-economic rights and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Mr. Mestres asserted that one of the most important targeted groups of the MEDA Democracy Programme is women.

He focused on their integration into political and economic life to stimulate public awareness of women's rights.

"Fifteen per cent of the projects funded in 1996, under the MEDA Democracy Programme involved women, and four out of six projects approved for Jordan tackle the issue of women's empowerment," Mr. Mestres affirmed.

He stressed that the promotion of women's integration, respect for women's rights, with an emphasis on the promotion of women's participation in political life and civil society, in general, "is a major European Commission priority in 1997 under this programme."

## Doctor, director of cultural centre testify in Masri case

By Rana Hussein  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Criminal Court Sunday heard two new witnesses in the case of Mazen Masri, a man accused of killing his two children in Shmeisani in September of last year.

Mr. Masri reportedly confessed to authorities, two weeks subsequent to his children's death, to poisoning them by administering cyanide pills instead of the regular vitamins the children generally took, before leaving for work on Sept. 11.

Physician Abdul Karim Miri, 58, told the court that he visited the aggrieved family often during the three-day mourning period.

Dr. Miri said that when the victims' family explained that the children had been found dead, he suggested that their death was either caused by a

cohort bite, "which is not native to Jordan," or by consuming cyanide.

"I noticed, when I mentioned the word, that no one knew about the deadly poison, and that some people could not even pronounce the word cyanide properly," he said.

Dr. Miri added that, during the wake, when asked his opinion of how cyanide could have reached the Masri house, "I answered that perhaps a lunatic who suffers from the AIDS disease might have done it to wreak revenge on people."

In January 1997, Mr. Masri retracted his confession before authorities, alleging that psychological pressure by authorities forced him to fabricate his confession.

He also claimed that he was encouraged to confess through promises of leniency, made by officials, if he admitted to the crime.

The two children, Hanin, nine, and Hani, six, were found collapsed by their mother Hiam Hamoudeh at 7:15 a.m. in their Abu Oneizah Housing Complex apartment.

Ms. Hamoudeh had left the house to give her husband a ride to work at 6:45 a.m.

Also testifying for the defence, was Director of Haya Cultural Centre Nabih Riyal who said that the children used to visit the centre on a daily basis.

"I noticed that Mr. Masri paid more attention and evidenced more concern for his children than other parents," Mr. Riyal stated.

The court tribunal comprised of Justices Abdul Rahman Tawfiq, Miftah Mubaidin and Abdul Hamid Sa'ad adjourned the court session until May 15 to hear the last three witnesses in the case.

## Saddam Hussein goes online — well, almost

AMMAN (R) — Fans of President Saddam Hussein can now send messages to the Iraqi president on the Internet via an official home page set up to celebrate his 60th birthday, a computer firm said on Sunday.

But well-wishers hoping for replies to their e-mail will have to be patient.

There are no Internet facilities in Iraq and President Saddam's electronic mail-box is 800 kilometres away in Jordan.

All messages have to travel by land in and out of sanction-hit Baghdad to and from Amman. "I will print them out here and send them by driver," said Iyad Awad, Amman representative of the Iraqi company Nahj Computer Services which set up the home page last week.

Mr. Awad said he had already received many messages but was saving them up "so we can send a big amount."

"It seems all the Arabic public was waiting for this, they are very enthusiastic," he told Reuters.

The page, at <http://196.27.0.22/Iraq>, shows Iraq's flag with the Arabic

inscription Allahu Akbar (God is great) and a grainy picture of Saddam Hussein, described simply as "the leader."

There is a biography of the president in Arabic and a description in English of the suffering which Iraqis have endured during nearly seven years of U.N. sanctions, imposed on Baghdad for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Blurred pictures of barely discernible tourist landmarks are also on show.

President Saddam rarely appears in public and skipped his own birthday parade in his hometown of Tikrit last week, but Mr. Awad said any e-mail addressed to him would be passed on to Iraqi authorities in Baghdad.

## COLOURS

An exhibit of modern design items and home accessories from top European creators at the old Asfour Mansion, Sharf Othman Ben Affan, off Rainbow Street. From 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. & 4 p.m. - 7 p.m. until May 7

## King urges population forum to support international efforts regarding refugee dilemmas

CAPE TOWN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday urged parliamentarians from Africa and the Arab World, currently meeting in South Africa to discuss population and development issues, to support international efforts aimed at addressing migratory, refugee and population dilemmas.

The King described need for the parliamentarians to tackle such issues which he described as resulting from political differences and conflicts and as distressing Africans and Arabs alike.

In a message addressed to the Parliamentary Forum for African and Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development Affairs, delivered on his behalf by former Minister Marwan Hmoud, the King stated that "one of the main issues and challenges facing Arab and African countries is the population explosion as rapid population growth is quickly devouring all development achievements and food production to an extent that it has transformed our rich countries into nations unable to satisfy their population's food needs."

"This situation has prevented Arab and African nations from attaining aspired progress as it has halted these coun-

tries from allocating reasonable income for vitally needed investments to meet the growing population's basic needs," according to the King.

"Should the situation remain unchanged, the peoples of Africa and the Arab World are bound to remain stymied, needy and continually facing diseases and illiteracy, while awaiting assistance parcelled out by advanced nations," he added.

"I hope you will support current efforts to end population dilemmas such as migration, refugees and people falling victim to sieges," King Hussein added.

He expressed hope that the sufferings would end and that political issues would be settled within a framework of justice and the protection of the rights of all nations as well as the termination of all forms of siege on nations which, he said, can no longer be justified.

King Hussein voiced his trust that the parliamentarians would proffer suggestions to address population issues, the status of women, family planning, migration of people from rural to urban areas and water problems which, he said, continuously threaten peace and future generations.

## 'Kingdom can plant 1 million palm trees in Jordan Valley'

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Khreisha Sunday stated that Jordan could plant up to a million palm trees on over 140,000 dunams of land, mainly in the Jordan Valley, which, he affirmed, has an appropriate warm climate in winter as well as a sufficient supply of water.

Addressing the opening session of a workshop convened to analyse an Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) study on prospects for planting palm trees and cultivating dates, the minister said that at least 11 million cubic metres of water could be annually supplied for these trees.

The study recommended that palm trees be commercially grown in Jordan and that palm tree cultivation could enable the Kingdom to diversify its agricultural output.

The ACC estimated Jordan's current annual imports of dates to be worth JD 1.4 million.

Many other date-based industries could be established, it said.

In order to implement such a project, the Ministry of Agriculture would have to secure sufficient tree saplings, offer loans to farmers from the ACC to finance planting and should provide extension services for the farmers subsequent to planting the trees, according to the study.

Suggesting that the private sector join the ministry and the ACC in producing dates, in high demand throughout the year, the minister noted that Jordan plans to invite other ministers of agriculture in the Arab World to visit the Kingdom and enlist their countries' assistance and expertise in planting them.

ACC Director General Nimer Nabulsi stated that the study aims to help Jordan diversify its agricultural output by planting palm trees while saving the country money which is now being spent on date imports.

He said that the study demonstrated the feasibility of the project and that the output could be marketed in Jordan and abroad.

## Minister dismisses call for foreign observers to monitor elections

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Interior Nathir Rashid Sunday dismissed a recent call for international observers to monitor parliamentary elections, describing such an idea as shameful for the country.

In an interview with the London-based Arabic magazine Al Wasat, Mr. Rashid affirmed that opposition groups' demand for observers to monitor general elections has been totally rejected by the government.

The opposition, led by the Islamic Action Front (IAF), had requested that the government accept election monitors; however, during an April press conference, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali stated that the government could not accept the idea of observers.

At the time, Dr. Majali also confirmed that the government would not forward an official invitation to either internal or international monitors, but added "everybody is welcome to come and watch," pledging his government's commitment to ensure fair and free elections.

"We, in Jordan, are known for our credibility," Mr. Rashid said. "In the past we have been asked to monitor and supervise elections of other countries."

"I consider this request as reflecting the opposition's apprehension in regards to the results of the coming elections as, had they been self-confident and assured of their electoral position, they would not have made the request," he added.

The government is preoccupied with issues other, but no less important, than the elections — especially the issue of safeguarding Jordan's security at social, cultural and humanitarian levels and ensuring that all people are allocated their rights under the law, the minister stated.

On another tack, Mr. Rashid described the peace process as currently stagnating but that His Majesty King Hussein is exerting all efforts to support Palestinian endeavours to overcome obstacles in the way of peace.

In the interview, the minister described Jordan's relations with neighbouring countries as good, "but we suffer from smuggling and we are trying with all firmness to prevent drug trafficking, arms smuggling and other illicit merchandise."

Mr. Rashid affirmed smuggling as traversing the northern and eastern borders, where, he said, smugglers employ modern technological equipment and use firearms in their operations.

King Hussein is personally concerned about this issue and has given directives that the Royal Badia Forces be supplied with sophisticated equipment for both diurnal and nocturnal surveillance of the borders.

He stated that Jordan is constantly coordinating efforts with Saudi Arabia to prevent smuggling operations.

Mr. Rashid called relations with Syria warm, adding that Amman and Damascus maintain official contacts.

Relations with Iraq are normal, he said, and our borders are open to citizens from both countries but we are determined to abort all forms of smuggling or infiltration from across Jordanian borders.

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- MANAGER-ACCOUNTS & ADMINISTRATION** - Chartered Accountant - ten years experience. Responsibilities include business development, client liaison, forecasting, estimation, costing & finance, time manpower & materials. Reporting directly to MD.
- SENIOR SALES ENGINEER** - Graduate in Electronics & Telecommunication with five years experience in Business development & Institutional sales. To have commanding qualities to lead Engineers team with essential expertise in System Design, Implementation, Operation & Maintenance of telecommunication systems, Computer Power Supplies, Installation, Programming, Repair & Maintenance of Electronic & Satellite equipments. Responsibilities include business development, client liaison, forecasting, estimation, costing & finance, time, manpower & materials.
- SECRETARY TO MD** - Graduate with ten years senior secretarial experience. Should be fluent in English and computer knowledge in word processing.
- SHOWROOM SALESMAN** - An aggressive and pleasant salesman to independently take charge of showroom which deals with Electronics, Telecommunications and GSM equipments / accessories.

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## WHAT'S GOING ON

### EXHIBITIONS

"Colours" an exhibit of modern design items and home accessories from European creators, old Asfour Mansion, Othman Ben Affan Street off Rainbow Street, until May 7.

"Works by contemporary painters from the Arab World" at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until May 15.

"Works by Iraqi artist Nuri Al Rawi" entitled "Departure of Innocence from the World" at Hamourah Arts Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until May 15.

"Bani Hamida spring exhibition entitled "Crossing Borders" (displaying rugs, cushions, ruins, and wall hangings) at the Jordan Contractors Association's Building, Deir Al Ghubar Tel. 658696, until May 18.

"Autographs by Salam Kanana at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani, (Tel. 681304) until May 13.

"Exhibition of frescoes of Jordanian mosaics and Syrian portraits by Dorothy Mango" at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre/Artisana, Jabal Amman, Second Circle (Tel. 647858), until May 10.

"Exhibition by the San Francisco-based Palestinian-American architectural photographer Said Hisham Hishamieh" entitled "The Farthest Mosque," at Darat Al Adnan, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 8. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.



# Blair puts radical stamp on Britain's new cabinet

LONDON (R) — Britain's new Prime Minister Tony Blair has named the Labour Party's first ruling cabinet in 18 years and made clear he intends to push ahead with a radical programme of action.

Foreign Secretary Robin Cook was quoted Sunday as saying the Labour government would sign the European Union's social chapter on workplace practices within the month. At the same time the race for the leadership of the defeated Conservative Party was thrown wide open by the announcement Saturday that former Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine would not be running.

Up to the moment when he was admitted to hospital with what Conservative Central Office described as slight angina pains, Mr. Heseltine had been front-runner to succeed John Major, who announced Friday he was stepping down as party leader following his crushing election defeat by Mr. Blair.

Mr. Blair's cabinet contains five women, the first openly homosexual minister — Chris Smith, who was given the national heritage portfolio — and, in education, secretary David

Blunkett, the first blind minister.

The appointment of social security expert Frank Field to a second-ranking ministerial post under Social Security Secretary Harriet Harman was seen as evidence that the Mr. Blair's government intends to mount a major shake-up of the welfare system. Mr. Cook made clear he would follow up on Labour's campaign pledge and sign the EU's social chapter within the month, although he said Britain was still unlikely to join the planned European single currency in the first wave in 1999.

"We want to take Britain back out of a position of isolation, out of inward-looking chauvinism and into being a leading member of an international community," he told the Observer newspaper. "Personally, I think we are entering a period when international politics is coming of age."

The Sunday Telegraph said Mr. Cook had clashed with Mr. Blair over the prime minister's plan, hastily dropped, to appoint a pro-European businessman as minister for Europe.

The Conservative Party, already reeling from its worst election defeat since

1832, was rocked by the news that Mr. Heseltine would not be running for the leadership. Another top Conservative, Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten, also ruled himself out of the race to become the leader who must rebuild the party to the point where it can challenge Labour's massive majority of nearly 180 seats in the House of Commons.

Many potential Conservative leadership candidates lost their seats in the Labour landslide. Former Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister) Kenneth Clarke, a pro-European, has already thrown his hat in the ring.

Former Social Security Secretary Peter Lilley also put himself forward. He is viewed as a candidate likely to please anti-British "Euro-sceptics."

"I believe I am the best-placed to reunite, rebuild and renew the party," Mr. Lilley said in an interview with Mail on Sunday newspaper.

But, acknowledging the grave difficulties faced by the Conservatives, he added: "We must restore our rapport with the country and end the caricature of the Tories (Conservatives) as hard-faced men without a

social conscience or a social dimension."

Potential leadership candidates who have not so far declared are former Welsh Secretary William Hague, who at 36 may be too young, and former Health Secretary Stephen Dorrell, seen as rather colourless.

Arch Eurosceptic John Redwood's prospects may have been boosted by the fact that the standard-bearer of the right, former Defence Secretary Michael Portillo, lost his seat. For the Blair family, there were decisions to be taken while the prime minister was drawing up his cabinet.

Traditionally, the prime minister and his family live at 10 Downing St., behind one of the most famous front doors in the world. But the "flat above the shop" was found to be too cramped for Mr. Blair, his wife Cherie and their three young children: Nicky, Euan and Kathryn. Instead they will live in the apartment above 11 Downing St. next door, traditionally the home of the chancellor of the exchequer.

The new chancellor Gordon Brown, who is a bachelor, will live in the smaller apartment above number 10.

## London's Royal Academy hit by fire

LONDON (R) — Firefighters Saturday battled a blaze at London's Royal Academy, one of the British capital's best-known art galleries.

Among its treasures is Michelangelo's Tondo, one of only four sculptures by the renaissance master outside Italy, but the work was not thought to have been affected by the fire.

About 100 people were led to safety before more than 100 firemen and about 15 fire engines fought the flames and prepared to mount a major salvage operation.

The world-famous building in Piccadilly is the head-

quarters of Britain's Royal Academy of Arts, founded in 1768 to group the country's most distinguished artists.

There were no reports of casualties and academy officials said only two galleries out of about 12 housing the annual summer exhibition were hit by the fire.

The London Fire Brigade said the roof of the building, where repair work had apparently been taking place, had caught fire.

Firefighters trying to gain access to the building were initially beaten back by the flames.

The ornate gallery regularly plays host to Britain's

most important art exhibitions.

Academy spokesman David Gordon said the summer exhibition — which provides a showcase for the work of academy members — would open as planned later this month, although with two galleries fewer than usual.

Mr. Gordon said a small number of architectural drawings and one or two sculptures had been damaged.

"There were no water sprinklers in the building. There was an argument about sprinklers in an art gallery because of potential damage to exhibits," he told reporters.

## New pro-democracy party launched in Hong Kong before handover

HONG KONG (R) — An independent Hong Kong legislator launched a pro-democracy party Sunday, just 58 days before the British colony reverts to Communist China.

Christine Loh, who will be kicked out of office on the handover of Hong Kong at midnight on June 30 when the existing legislature is disbanded, pledged to remain in politics for 10 years.

"There is a view that political work is going to be different after July 1 because China is less tolerant of political diversity and dissent some people see politicians as an endangered species," Ms. Loh said just ahead of the official launch of the Citizens Party.

"Hong Kong will become a part of the Chinese state... this can be frightening because we are fearful of the opaque and more authoritarian nature of the mainland political culture," she said in a Hong Kong Radio broadcast.

Ms. Loh said these con-

cerns could not be allowed to freeze Hong Kong people into inaction.

"We must learn more about the Chinese system. We advocate dialogue with China," she said. "We must learn how to preserve the more liberal Hong Kong system."

The new Citizens Party advocates universal suffrage in Hong Kong and free market economics allied with environmentally friendly policies.

Ms. Loh does not believe her new party would split the pro-democracy camp in Hong Kong.

"I reckon, we reckon, the market is not saturated for politics in Hong Kong," she told a news conference.

"We also want to build a political culture in Hong Kong — competitive but not adversarial," Ms. Loh said.

The leader of Hong Kong's Democratic Party, Martin Lee, said he shared Ms. Loh's views.

"One more party will give the people more choice,"

Mr. Lee, who attended the launch, said.

Mr. Lee and his colleagues in the Democratic Party — the largest and oldest party in Hong Kong — will lose their seats in the Legislative Council at the handover.

China was angered by democratic reforms introduced by Britain in the twilight of colonial rule and will disband the legislature returned under the reformed electoral laws in 1995.

An interim Provisional Legislature will be installed in its place. It is expected to draft new electoral laws in time for polls expected in 1998.

Ms. Loh and the Democrats boycotted the Provisional Legislature selection process held last December. They argued it was unconstitutional.

Ms. Loh said she planned to contest elections to the Legislative Council in 1998. Her less experienced colleagues were likely to cut their teeth on lower tier municipal elections, she said.

## Everest expedition discovers frozen body of S. African photographer

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Indonesian climbers on Mount Everest discovered the frozen body of British-born South African photographer Bruce Herrod, who disappeared near the summit of the world's tallest peak last year, a report said.

Members of the Indonesian expedition discovered Herrod's body last week at the foot of the so-called "Hillary Step," a 20-metre rock face near the 8,848-metre summit of Everest, Johannesburg's Sunday Times newspaper reported.

Herrod was missing soon

after he reached the peak in the late hours of May 24, 1996 — about seven hours behind his South African teammates.

He had struggled behind the others, and began descending the mountain in the dark, in extremely cold temperatures, according to teammates Ian Woodall and Cathy O'Dowd.

Anatoli Boukreev, the Russian mountaineer leading the Indonesian expedition, reportedly told American Todd Bureson, the leader of another expedition, that Herrod's body was

on a narrow ledge directly below a dangerous crag, the newspaper said.

Mountaineers aiming to climb Everest this spring will virtually have to step over the body, Boukreev added.

The Russian added that he had buried the body of New Zealander Scott Fischer, the renowned mountaineer who died in a storm that claimed 10 lives just weeks before the South African expedition last year.

## Sri Lankan rebels bombard northern air base

COLOMBO (R) — Sri

Lankan Tamil Tiger guerrillas bombed a northern government air base, sparking an artillery duel in the early hours of Sunday, residents and military officials said.

"Most of the shells appeared to fall on the main military base. They were targeting the air force runway," said a resident in Vavuniya, 220 kilometres north of Colombo. "We're unaware of the damage. Explosions rocked the area," he added. "We could hear the gunfire and the whine of shells flying through the air."

Army gunners at the Vavuniya base returned fire, and the artillery duel, which began around 1.30 a.m., went on for about an hour, residents and military officials said.

Military officials said the air force had stopped parking aircraft at the base after a previous attack by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels using long-range guns captured in raids on army bases.

"We can't say if the attack caused any damage because we don't want the Tigers to know how accurate their firing was," a military official said.

The rebels, fighting for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in the mainly Sinhalese Indian Ocean island's north and east, fired about 30 shells, wounding a policeman and the principal of a school, he said.

The rebel artillery attack could be an effort to disrupt preparations by the military to open a land route to the northern Jaffna peninsula, through the north-central Wanni mainland, most of which is under rebel control, he said.

The military is believed to be preparing for an offensive to link Vavuniya with the Jaffna peninsula, about 100 kilometres further north.

The military now relies entirely on air and sea transport to send troops and supplies to bases in Jaffna.

The government says more than 50,000 have died in the war, now in its 14th year. The Tigers say the death toll is higher.



Katrina and the Waves, representing the United Kingdom pose for photographers after winning the Eurovision Song Contest 1997 with the song Love Shine A Light written by Kimberly Rew. Katrina and the Waves won with 227 points out of 25 countries from all over Europe (Reuters photo)

## European Song Contest goes on despite bomb call

DUBLIN (R) — Britain emerged victorious Saturday night at the Eurovision Song Contest, despite bomb warning from a telephone caller claiming to speak for hardline pro-British "loyalists."

Ireland's broadcasting network, RTE, which produced the live television broadcast seen by an estimated 300 million viewers, reported that nothing was found from a search of the venue, the Point Depot Complex in Dublin, after the warning was relayed to a Belfast television station.

"An immediate but discreet search was made by Special Branch officers when the warning was received but nothing was found in the building," an RTE reporter said.

RTE said in a news report that a caller had claimed that two devices had been planted and gave a 30-minute warning just before the start of the contest.

The caller claimed to represent the Loyalist Volunteer Force, a recently formed extremists group pledged to keep Northern Ireland under British rule.

The competition, won by British band, Katrina and the Waves, was held amid unprecedented security following police fears that Protestant guerrillas might stage an attack.

The British entry, however, coasted to success scooping 227 points, with Ire-

land in second with 157 and Turkey in third with 121.

Some 400 police officers, some of them armed, were on duty around the venue.

"There is a lot of security at the building, just to make sure," a spokesman for the competition told Reuters before it got underway.

Police and security experts guarded the Point Theatre in the run-up to the event and the venue was closed for two hours in the afternoon as officers with sniffer dogs combed the complex.

Irish President Mary Robinson and Prime Minister John Bruton were among 3,000 spectators at the theatre in Dublin.

Entrants from 25 coun-

tries took part competing for the honour of winning the prize for the best song.

Irish newspapers had reported fears that Northern Ireland-based Protestant "loyalist" guerrillas might try to disrupt the Eurovision competition in retaliation for recent IRA action in Britain.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA), fighting to end British rule of Northern Ireland, forced the postponement of the famous Grand National Horse Steeplechase in April with a bomb attack on the racecourse.

It has also disrupted Britain's travel network several times in recent weeks with a series of bomb attacks and bomb calls.

## Aid workers arrested in Kabul — relief official

KABUL (Agencies) — At least 12 aid workers, all Afghan nationals, have been arrested by the Taliban authorities in Kabul on charges of gun running, a relief official said Sunday.

"At least 12 aid organisation employees were arrested last Tuesday. The staff have been accused of gun running," said Ross Everson of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, an umbrella body.

He said the arrested workers, all men, were from three aid organisations: The French-based Afghan Vaccination and Immunisation Centre (AVICEN) and locally based organisations, Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan (DHS) and Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance.

AVICEN and DHS were also accused as organisations of involvement in gun running, he said.

According to Mr. Everson, the men were arrested by the First Army Division, but he said he had been

unable to find out what had become of them.

"We are doing our utmost to find out what has happened to these men. We have seen the first army division, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Security Ministry, but they either do not know what is happening or they are not saying," Mr. Everson said.

Mr. Everson said he would continue to try to find out what had happened to the men.

On Feb. 27 seven employees of the French aid organisation Action Contre la Faim (Action Against Hunger) were arrested by the Taliban authorities and accused of immoral behaviour.

They have all been released after serving varying sentences, some of which included a symbolic whipping.

Meanwhile, mobile anti-vehicle patrols of the Afghan Taliban militia here punished five beard trimmers and a tailor taking ladies' measurements, state-run

radio announced.

"Five men who had either shaved or trimmed their beards were necessarily punished," Taliban-mouthpiece Radio Shariat announced.

"A tailor who was taking the measurements of two ladies, contrary to the principles of Islam, was also necessarily punished and the ladies were given moral advice," the report added.

The report did not specify the type of punishment banded out to the offenders Saturday, but a common punishment is a light beating with a long stick, more for public humiliation than for physical pain.

The patrols are conducted by the Department of Fostering Virtue and Suppressing Vice, a special office with emergency powers to crack down on wrongdoing in the Afghan capital, seized last September and relatively liberal prior to its capture.

The teams also patrolled the city inviting the citizens to perform their five times daily prayers in congrega-

tion," Radio Shariat added.

The so-called Religious Police use speedy Japanese-made four-wheel drive vehicles — mounted with megaphones and equipped with a microphone near the driver's seat — to cruise the city in search of offenders.

Rules banning the trimming of beards — or even worse shaving — originate from interpretations of the "sunnat," or examples of the Prophet Muhammad.

Laws regarding the appearance of women originate from the Koranic verse requiring women to dress modestly.

Women are made to wear a head-to-toe garment called a burqa, with only a piece of gauze over the eyes to allow a blurry glimpse of the outside world.

In the two-thirds of Afghanistan under their control, the Taliban have imposed a strict interpretation of (Shariat) Islamic Law in their aim to bring a "pure Islamic state" to the war-torn country.

## U.N. recommends no action on fleeing Albanians

TIRANA (R) — A United Nations refugee official recommended Saturday, no action against the flood of Albanians trying to flee their homeland, until after a general election.

Thousands of Albanians have fled across the Adriatic to Italy, or over the southern border into Greece — since a wave of violence broke three months ago when popular, high-risk savings funds collapsed.

Although the main reasons for the exodus appeared to be economic or to escape the armed gangs now terrorising southern Albania, the U.N. official said there was a political element that could lead to harassment if people were sent back.

"I would recommend that host countries take no action against Albanians until after the general election (expected on June 29)," Olivier Guignabaudet, on a mission in Albania for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), told Reuters.

"It is better to resolve the conflict through the ballot box rather than through bullets," he said. "Allow these people to remain on temporary residency... Then after the election the international community can draw its conclusion. Starting to think about a return programme now is, in my view, premature."

This is the second time that large numbers of people from Europe's poorest nation have fled their homeland.

A huge number of Albanians emigrated illegally to Italy and Greece in 1991 and 1992 after the collapse of the ruthless Stalinist government which ruled for 46 years.

On March 1 this year, Albania's Democratic Party government was forced to resign as angry Albanians took to the streets to protest the collapsed savings schemes.

President Sali Berisha, who has ruled since 1992, appointed an interim all-party government and agreed to call an election, four years early, to restore faith in the government.

While the democrats and

opposition socialists struggle to agree on election laws, the international community is urging the election and a multi-national force has been deployed in Albania to oversee aid deliveries.

Mr. Guignabaudet recommended countries housing illegal immigrants could implement a return-to-vote programme, encouraging Albanians to return home voluntarily to vote.

Meanwhile, smugglers are cashing in on the mass exodus.

An estimated 103 people drowned on March 28 when a ship from Vlora in southern Albania collided with an Italian Navy frigate 30 miles off Brindisi in southern Italy. The passengers paid \$500 each for a space on the boat.

A week ago Italian authorities at Badetta rescued 571 Albanians crammed into a vessel built for 50 that left from Velipoje beach, 30 kms from Shkoder in northern Albania. Italy has returned 267 of these people, Albanian News Agency (ATA) said.

Another man died in an exchange of fire in Berat, also in the south of Albania, officials said.

In recent days 4,000 people have been camped out near Velipoje, hoping to leave for Italy but have been prevented by Italian Navy vessels patrolling the coast.

Mr. Guignabaudet said economic reasons undoubtedly caused many Albanians to leave, as during 1991 and 1992.

"But these economic conditions have always existed. At both times of these mass departures, critical political changes have taken place," he said.

Meanwhile, five people died and an important bridge on a main road in southern Albania was seriously damaged in a series of violent incidents, the Albanian Interior Ministry reported Saturday.

Three people died and three others were injured during a shoot-out between rival gangs in the southern town of Permet, the ministry said.

Another man died in an exchange of fire in Berat, also in the south of Albania, officials said.

A fifth victim died in the town of Shkoder, police said.



## Republic 'inevitable' for New Zealand — Labour leader

AUCKLAND (AFP) — Breaking historic constitutional links with Britain and becoming a republic is "inevitable" for New Zealand, Labour Party leader Helen Clark said.

She is setting up talks with Maori to discuss a constitution for the country once the link with Britain is broken.

Ms. Clark briefly mentioned the issue in a speech at Labour's Auckland Regional Conference, the first time she has broached it in front of her party.

"In my view it is inevitable that New Zealand will become a republic," she told the New Zealand Press Association after her speech.

"While everyone, or most people, respect the present queen as a gracious, diligent person they don't have the same respect for her heirs and successors."

"And if Australia is to become a republic ... then at some stage the issue is going to be when does New Zealand move," she added.

She said discussions with Maori would form part of a process already under way; the party was being briefed by Maori organisations about their aspirations. But she would not speculate on when the change to republican status would come.

Ms. Clark last year looked set to become New Zealand's first woman prime minister until New Zealand first — which held the balance in the elections — chose National as its preferred coalition partner.

Prime Minister Jim Bolger once suggested the year 2000, although he found little favour for the idea within his own party and it is not on the National's agenda.

"We are not in the position of Australia — although they were not sensitive to the rights of their first people either — and for us it's a bit like Canada," she said.

"Canada finds it very difficult to negotiate a constitutional settlement because of the place of their first people."

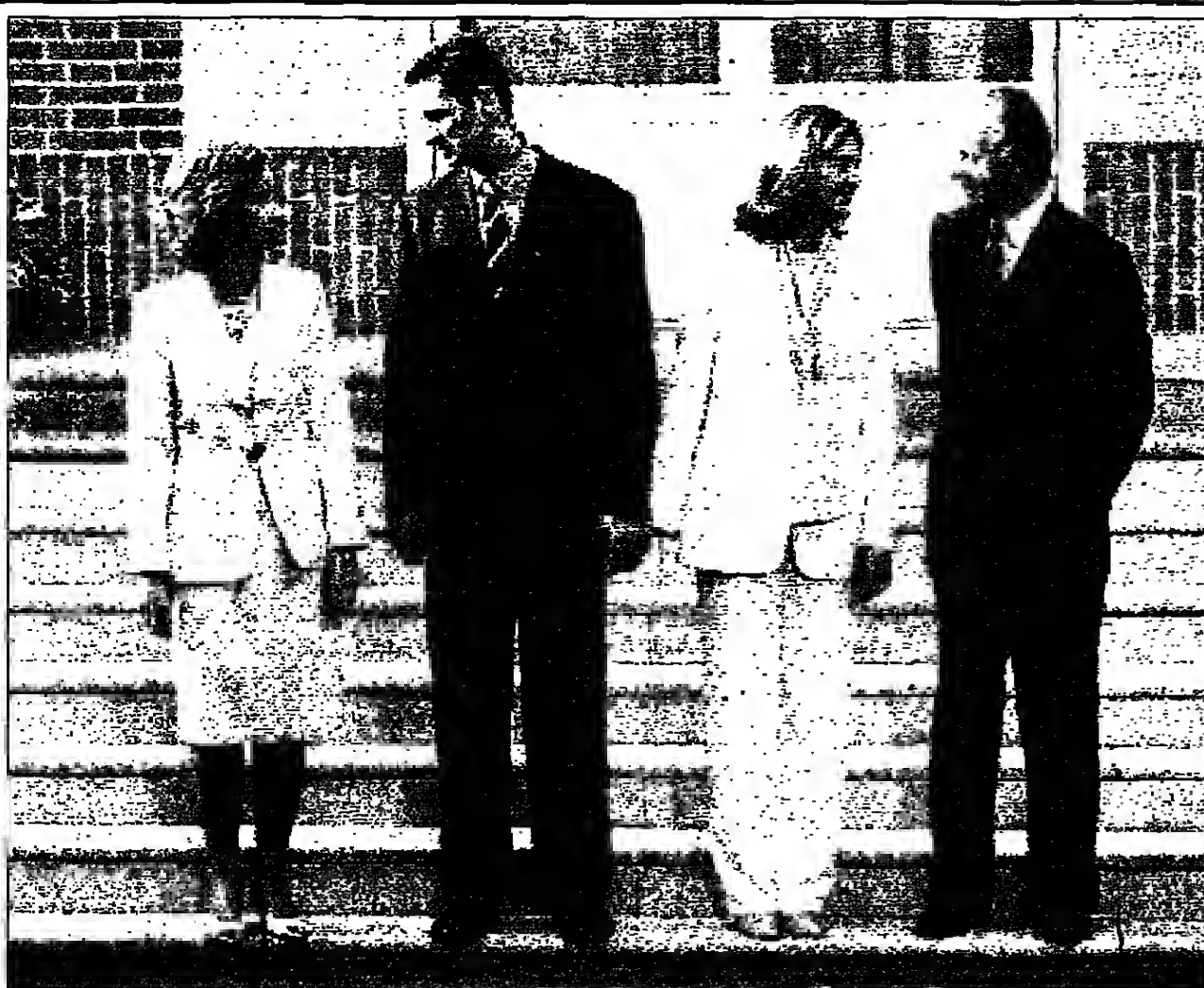
Ms. Clark said she was not pretending to have any answers, but the change had to be considered and dialogue had to be opened with Maori.

"It will happen. It's a question of when. I grew up in a New Zealand where people still called their children after children of the royal family. That has changed completely, and it will keep on changing," she said.

Earlier in the conference she lambasted the coalition government made up of centre-right National and New Zealand First parties for launching a "second wave of Thatcherism," referring to Britain's former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, signalled by imminent privatisation of airports, electricity and television, the Sunday Star Times reported.

Capitalising on this week's landslide victory for the British Labour Party, and with the image of New Zealand's coalition government in tatters amid a serious fraud office investigation of New Zealand First MP Tukoroirangi Morgan for extravagant spending, Ms. Clark referred to the "sleaze" surrounding New Zealand First.

Many were shocked by the latest new right policies including moves to deregulate postal services and cast kindergarten teachers outside the state sector announced this week, she said.



Spanish Princess Cristina holds the hand of her fiancé Iñaki Urdangarín as she talks to her father King Juan Carlos while Queen Sofia talks to her future son-in-law after the engagement ceremony at Zarzuela Palace Saturday. King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia gave their blessings to the upcoming marriage of their youngest daughter Cristina to professional handball player Urdangarín (Reuter photo)

## Spain's king gives blessing to daughter's marriage

MADRID (R) — Spain's King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia gave their blessing Saturday to the marriage of their younger daughter to a professional handball player, the palace said.

Iñaki Urdangarín, dressed in a smart dark suit and tie, had gone to Zarzuela Palace, the royal residence, to ask formally for Princess Cristina's hand.

The couple smiled and giggled as they wandered through the palace gardens holding hands for the first time in public under the spotlight of cameras and reporters.

"I think it's great because if she's happy, I'm happy," King Juan Carlos said as the pair posed on the palace steps with their relatives.

Princess Cristina, 31, wearing a cream-coloured trouser suit, happily held up her finger to show off a diamond ring that her fiancé gave her as an engagement present.

Word of the engagement emerged Wednesday when the palace said Princess Cristina would marry Mr. Urdangarín, 29, whom she met at the Olympic Games in Atlanta last year.

The couple said they planned to marry later this year in Barcelona, where they both live and work.

Mr. Urdangarín, born in the Basque town of Zumaraga, is the son of a banking family and plays handball for Barcelona and Spain.

At the Atlanta Games, his team won a bronze medal which he later physically split in half with an injured team mate who could not attend the Olympics. Spanish media reported.

Mr. Urdangarín, standing 1.96 metres, is rated as one of Spain's top five handball players of all time and has

expressed a desire to go on playing professionally after the marriage.

Media reports have described him as the perfect gentleman who, among other things, likes to cook and listen to the British rock group Queen.

Princess Cristina, third in line to the throne, also intends to continue working at the Savings Bank where she assists with cultural projects, the palace said.

The children of Spain's king and queen have captured the affection of the public with their down-to-earth style and the family has become a symbol of their country's young democracy.

When King Juan Carlos came to the throne after the death of dictator General Francisco Franco in 1975, he guided the country to democratic rule and he further cemented a place in the

hearts of the public when he averted a military coup in 1981.

He has tried hard to allow his children to lead as normal a life as possible, encouraging to marry for love and not status, according to media reports.

It will be the second royal wedding in two years. Princess Elena, the elder daughter, married Spanish businessman Jaime de Marichalar in a lavish ceremony in 1995.

"Already the second one has gone," the king told reporters with a broad smile on his face.

The youngest member of the family, Crown Prince Felipe, 29, is still single. Asked by reporters when he would marry, he lifted a hand to his ear and joked: "I'm a little deaf at the moment."

## Taiwan people march against social disorder

TAIPEI (R) — More than 20,000 demonstrators, wielding anti-government banners and wearing white mourning bands, took to the streets of Taipei Sunday in protest against the government's failure to check a spate of violent crimes.

The demonstrators, shocked by the recent kidnap and murder of a famous actress's teenage daughter, planned to march to the presidential office and deliver a letter demanding the resignation of Premier Lien Chan.

"We will all lie down in front of the presidential office in a peaceful protest," said Lee Tien-Chien, a rally leader, as the throng gathered in Taipei's Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall to commence the march.

"We will demand an apology from (Taiwan President) Lee Teng-Hui and ask Lien Chan to resign," Lee said.

In the latest of a string of violent crimes that have hit Taiwan in the past year, police last month found the body of 17-year-old Pai Hsiao-Yen, daughter of actress Pai Ping-Ping, floating naked in a river.

The kidnappers, who remained at large, had strangled the teenager with two ropes, bound her hands and sunk her in the river with weights.

Activists said the murder was a stark example of how the government was failing to protect its people.

"We simply cannot be silent students anymore. We demand that the government start taking responsibility for the deterioration of social values," said a college student who joined the largely non-political march.

"This march is not about one party against another. Instead, it is about the welfare of the Taiwan people," said Lin Yi-hsiung, a prominent official of the main opposition Democratic Progressive Party.

But terse banners that read "outrage" and "grieve" signalled a united anti-government sentiment.

Interior Minister Lin Feng-Cheng acknowledged in December that Taiwan's social order had deteriorated to a "shocking" level, with the crime rate soaring by 80 per cent between 1990 to 1996.

The rebels, who say Texas is an independent nation, held a military-style ceremony where they laid down their guns in a circle before giving themselves up to police. Police said they later found 24 pipe bombs in the compound.

Mr. McLaren and the others were taken to Presidio County jail in nearby Marfa. Texas where he smiled and waved the agreement as he was driven by. The Republic members face a battery of charges in the siege, which began Sunday when they took two hostages in retaliation for the arrest by local police of security chief Robert Scheidt on weapons charges.

Police patted themselves on the back for reaching a peaceful conclusion, but there was still work to be done. Two of the rebels chose not to surrender and fled into the surrounding Davis Mountains where helicopters, bloodhounds and troopers on horses searched for them.

The end to the tense siege came a few hours after Mr. McLaren's wife, Evelyn, left the rebels' un-walled compound to surrender. She told police the other Republic members were ready to

## Chirac to enter fray as poll lead narrows

PARIS (AFP) — President Jacques Chirac is set to enter the fray in the French legislative election campaign this week, as his centre-right majority battles for reelection in ballots barely three weeks away.

The Gaullist head of state is expected to make a personal appeal to voters Wednesday — the second anniversary of his own election — after a weekend poll showed the right's lead narrowing, according to press reports.

The poll indicated the lead held by the Rally for the Republic (RPR) and Union for French Democracy (UDF) was down to 10 seats in the 577-seat National Assembly, which it formerly controlled with an 80 per cent majority.

Perhaps more worryingly, some 36 per cent of voters say they are undecided about how they will vote in the two-round ballots on May 25 and June 1, according to the new poll in the Journal Du Dimanche (JDD) newspaper.

Most polls over the last two weeks have given the right a lead of from 40 to 100 seats.

The French election race was launched on April 21 when Mr. Chirac announced the dissolution of Parliament, saying he needed a new parliamentary mandate to continue economic reforms and take France further into Europe.

Over the last two weeks the parties have been mostly jockeying for position, with events overshadowed by the elections across the channel in Britain.

Since the landslide victory by Labour Party leader Tony Blair Thursday, both the French left and right have sought to interpret the British result for their own ends.

Premier Alain Juppe did so again Sunday, denying that the British left's success could be repeated in France.

The British Labour Party won because they had the courage to change. The French left has not changed. They have learned no les-

sons from history," he said.

In fact the French campaigns proper only start Monday. Mr. Chirac, who as president has no formal role in the legislative elections apart from calling them, is expected to make a "direct intervention" probably Wednesday, according to the JDD.

Mr. Juppe declined to confirm what form the intervention might take, but added: "It is normal that the president says what he thinks, and what he wants," noting that the move would not be unprecedented.

The timing of the French president's intervention has been much discussed. The choice of the second anniversary of his election on May 7, 1995 — when he beat Socialist Party (PS) leader Lionel Jospin — would be neatly symbolic.

Mr. Chirac is to travel to China the following week for a four-day trip May 14-18.

Mr. Jospin, who has forged links with the Communists and the Greens in a bid to overturn his party's routing in 1993 ballots, has made the fight against joblessness the central plank of his campaign.

The party manifesto unveiled Friday notably pledged to create 700,000 jobs for the young and introduce a 35-hour work week without loss of pay in place of the current 39 hours.

Mr. Juppe again lashed out at the manifesto Sunday — and in particular accused Mr. Jospin of "electoralism" over Europe by saying he would set new conditions for France's participation in a single European currency.

"Lionel Jospin has just made a quite clear change in direction, an electioneering change in direction which would lead France to turn its back on Europe. That would be a heavy responsibility," he told the JDD.

Oce government figure who will not be campaigning is Culture Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy, who was stabbed in the back Friday evening by a man

with mental problems, and is expected to take at least a few weeks to recover.

Mr. Douste-Blazy is expected to leave hospital in two or three days, officials said Sunday.

President Chirac had a long telephone conversation with him Sunday, the Elysee Palace said, reporting that he would probably be allowed out of hospital mid-week, but would have to convalesce for some time.

The attack also means Mr. Douste-Blazy will not be fit enough to open the 54th Cannes Film Festival Thursday, the Culture Ministry said.

His assailant, identified as 37-year-old Albanian Adnan Cifti, who had already attacked the minister in 1992, was charged Saturday with attempted murder.

Mr. Cifti, who has a history of mental illness and violence, had already attacked the minister with a screwdriver in May 1992 in Lourdes Town Hall where Mr. Douste-Blazy is mayor.

Doctors in Toulouse, where the minister was transferred after initial emergency treatment in Lourdes, said Mr. Douste-Blazy, 44, was "perfectly conscious and in good form."

Professor Marcel Delann, head of thoracic surgery at Purpan Hospital, said Saturday that Mr. Douste-Blazy was making good progress, adding "there is no problem."

Mr. Douste-Blazy suffered a broken rib in the attack and doctors were forced to drain a lung cavity which was also pierced, although the injuries were not life-threatening.

Mr. Cifti attacked Mr. Douste-Blazy Friday while the minister was talking to a shopkeeper in the souvenir shop where Bernadette Soubirou claimed to have seen several visions of the Virgin Mary in 1858.

Mr. Cifti, who is originally from Durres in southern Albania but who has lived in Lourdes since 1992, was incarcerated in a psychiatric hospital after the first incident and released in September 1996.

## Texas rebels surrender without a shot

FORT DAVIS, Texas (R) — A week-long standoff between police and armed Texas separatists ended without a shot Saturday when the rebel leader gave up his vow to fight to the death and surrendered.

Republic of Texas "ambassador" Richard McLaren, his wife and three followers, surrounded by elite police units, walked out of their mountain hideout and into what promises to be a long legal battle after signing a ceasefire agreement that McLaren appeared to view as a victory.

The rebels, who say Texas is an independent nation, held a military-style ceremony where they laid down their guns in a circle before giving themselves up to police. Police said they later found 24 pipe bombs in the compound.

Mr. McLaren and the others were taken to Presidio County jail in nearby Marfa. Texas where he smiled and waved the agreement as he was driven by. The Republic members face a battery of charges in the siege, which began Sunday when they took two hostages in retaliation for the arrest by local police of security chief Robert Scheidt on weapons charges.

Police patted themselves on the back for reaching a peaceful conclusion, but there was still work to be done. Two of the rebels chose not to surrender and fled into the surrounding Davis Mountains where helicopters, bloodhounds and troopers on horses searched for them.

The end to the tense siege came a few hours after Mr. McLaren's wife, Evelyn, left the rebels' un-walled compound to surrender. She told police the other Republic members were ready to

quit.

Texas Department of Public Safety spokesman Mike Cox said Mr. McLaren, who talked tough throughout the ordeal and vowed to never surrender, was persuaded to give up by the dozens of heavily armed police who Friday night moved within a quarter-mile of what he called "the embassy."

"He was very much aware we had a very strong presence around his area," Mr. Cox said.

Mr. McLaren, a 43-year-old winemaker from Missouri, had shown little willingness to surrender until the Friday deployment. As the police moved in, he shouted out on shortwave radio an international "mayday" call and told police: "We'll take a good hunk of you boys with us."

Estimates of up to 200 police poured into the area to surround the rebels, backed by armoured personnel carriers, military helicopters, hattering rams and bomb disposal units.

Mr. McLaren was arraigned Saturday night before Justice of the Peace Cinderella Gonzalez, who ordered him jailed without bond. Along with charges tied to the kidnapping, the McLarens will face federal tax and fraud charges, officials said.

The siege ended a dispute that had been brewing for four months since Mr. McLaren ignored a federal judge's order to appear in court in a dispute about the many bogus liens and other legal papers he filed in the name of the Republic of Texas. He holed up in the "embassy" defying police to arrest them.

Attorney Terence O'Rourke, who represented the McLarens in the tortuous negotiations leading to the

siege's end, said Mr. McLaren was happy because the ceasefire agreement included recognition of the Republic of Texas and an assurance that he could argue before a federal judge in Washington, D.C. That there should be a referendum on the issue of Texas independence.

It also allows the Republic to fly its flag — a lone yellow star on a blue field — over the west Texas "embassy," he said.

The Republic of Texas, which claims to have thousands of members and ties to anti-government militia groups, says that Texas' 1845 annexation by the United States was illegal. Texas was an independent nation for nine years after it broke from Mexico in an 1836 rebellion Mr. McLaren likened to his own.

Bu police indicated the agreement might not be worth much.

"There is no agreement other than they agreed to come out peacefully and they agreed to cease fire," Mr. Cox said. "There were no promises on the part of the Department of Public Safety."

Nonetheless, Mr. O'Rourke said it was sufficient to stop a possible bloodbath. "They (police) were ready to push the button. It was a now or never situation."

Mindful of the disastrous conclusion to similar standoffs at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and the Branch Davidians compound in Waco, Texas, police were intent avoiding bloodshed. During the week, they arrested nine armed men on their way to help the Republic.

"We are relieved to finally resolve a standoff situation that has been in the national limelight in a peaceful manner. We hope that we've shown the world how it's done right," Mr. Cox said.

## Ukraine, Romania initial friendship treaty

KIEV (R) — The foreign ministers of Ukraine and Romania initialled Saturday a long-delayed post-Communist friendship treaty that may improve Bucharest's chances for early NATO membership.

Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine told a news conference the document proclaimed the present borders between the two countries "inviolable" and said neither nation would have any claims on the territory of the other.

Mr. Udovenko and Adrian Severin of Romania initialled the treaty, which is due to be formally signed by the presidents of the two countries and ratified by their parliaments.

The Soviet Union seized chunks of Romanian territory in 1940 under the secret Soviet-German Pact and these territories, including northern Bukovina and southern Bessarabia, became part of Ukraine after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

"There is an article in the document confirming the inviolability of the existing borders and proclaiming that (both sides) would not have any territorial claims to each other now and in the future," Mr. Udovenko said.

The advantages, according to Col. Carr, are chiefly cost. Despite the programme's \$500 million price tag, the army calculates that the cost per hour of keeping an Aerostat aloft will be about \$500 compared to thousands of dollars an hour for an AWACS surveillance plane.

Moreover, a balloon could fly for two to three weeks at a time, the army says.

On the other hand, a 71 metre long balloon would be a pretty inviting target.

"The balloon does not pop," Col. Carr said here in a recent series of briefings put on by the army's Space and Strategic Defence Command here. "You can fill it full of 20 mm holes and it gradually loses pressure but it does not pop."

He contends the Aerostat's best defence would be its ability to spot missiles from afar and direct Patriot crews or aircraft to destroy them.

Rocket fire and artillery would be a threat but the balloons would be tethered out of range.

The biggest threat would probably be commando assaults, according to Carr, so the balloons would have to be tied down inside a defended perimeter.

Although susceptible to weather, two balloons staked far apart could provide all weather coverage, he said.

Some Middle Eastern countries already are using balloons for military purposes. Israel, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia either already have them or are buying them, Col. Carr said.

By Jim Mannion  
Agence France Presse

HUNTSVILLE, Alabama — In a marriage of the old and new, the U.S. military is bringing back balloons — this time fitted with sophisticated radars to guard against Cruise missile attacks.

Using balloons as observation platforms in war goes back more than a hundred years to the American Civil War when they were used to direct artillery fire.

Now the U.S. army wants to use the Aerostat, as its calling the newfangled balloon, as a relatively cheap way to give ground forces a way to look over the horizon for stealthy, terrain-skimming Cruise missiles.

"Using that elevated sensor we're able to see a Cruise missile at extended ranges," said army Colonel Herb Carr, who is in charge of the \$500 million programme to develop and test a prototype by 2002.

The radar horizon of a Patriot missile defence is only about 30 kilometres, which doesn't leave forces on the ground much time to shoot it down.

But lifting radars 5,000 metres off the ground in a tethered balloon dramatically expands the horizon to as much 300 kilometres, Col. Carr said.

The army's concept calls for using balloons that are bigger than a Jumbo Jet and can carry nearly 1,800 kilograms of radar, electronic warfare gear, remote controls for long range.

It would be tethered with a cable containing a fiber optic







# Features

## BBC's editorial spirit living on — aired from the tiny Gulf state of Qatar

By Ian Richardson

ON APRIL 28, the BBC World Service announced that its widely acclaimed Arabic radio transmissions are shortly to be increased by five hours a day, providing the Middle East and North Africa with a continuous service of just under 18 hours a day. Ironically, this news coincided with the first anniversary of the closure of the ill-fated BBC Arabic Television Channel.

Launched in June 1994, the channel was unique for several reasons, but primarily because it was funded by a Saudi Arabian conglomerate, Mawarid. The BBC's attempt to establish a Saudi-funded Arabic-language television channel hearned across the Middle East, North Africa and ultimately to Europe and the United States, was either brave or foolhardy — depending on your point of view.

The question — one that I have never been able to answer to my total satisfaction — is this: Was Mawarid's funding of the project also brave or foolhardy, or just naive?

The difficult negotiations for this channel had gone on between the BBC and Mawarid's subsidiary, the Rome-based Orbit Communications Corporation, for several months. World Service Television — as BBC Worldwide Television, the corporation's commercial arm, was then known — desperately needed a huge injection of funds to cover itself financially in the wake of Rupert Murdoch's surprise purchase of Star-TV, from which he had unceremoniously dumped the BBC's signal to the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and China. The idea of the Arabic channel was conceived, sold and purchased on the foundations

and ethos of BBC World Service Radio's Arabic Service, which attracts a regular listenership of 14 million, making it arguably the most powerful media force in the Arab World.

World Service Television's chief executive, Chris Irwin, soon to fall victim to a classic BBC restructuring, had sought the views of his former World Service Radio colleagues at Bush House about the project. There were a number of senior people at Bush House who'd had bruising encounters with the Saudi Arabians, and they all urged great caution. There was particular scepticism about assurances from Irwin that Orbit was prepared to sign an agreement guaranteeing BBC editorial independence.

During the short life of BBC Arabic Television, there were several angry liaison meetings and phone conversations with Orbit, and the guarantees of editorial independence proved to be a sour joke, only barely obscured by a thin smokescreen about the BBC's alleged failure to observe "cultural sensitivities" — Saudi code for anything not to its liking. It was only a matter of time before there would be a final parting of the ways.

Orbit's agreement to work with the BBC for an "orderly wind-down" of the service proved to be worthless when Orbit simply switched off the BBC channel, at the close of transmissions on the night of Saturday, April 20. The newsroom, the Arabic-language computer terminals, a purpose-built digital studio, the editing rooms and the presentation suites were all mothballed while Orbit exercised its ownership of the equipment.

Within days of Arabic

Television being switched off by Orbit, several potential alternative backers had emerged and preliminary negotiations got under way in an atmosphere of great secrecy. These have come to nothing, and Worldwide has turned its attention to other partnerships.

There have been many losers from the Arabic Television project, not least the tens of millions of Arabs who have been deprived of the opportunity to have an unbiased, modern television service tailored to their own culture and in their own language. And there's Orbit itself. Three years on from its launch, it is without the only channel that was both unique and prestigious, and its subscribers continue to be counted in thousands rather than millions.

The corporation's image in the Arab World was seriously tarnished by getting into bed with the Saudis to produce what some sections of the Arab press sneeringly called "the BBC's Petrodollar Channel". The abrupt closure provoked widespread jeers of "we told you so" and damaged the BBC's ability — and its will — to introduce multiple-foreign-language television channels, broadly emulating BBC World Service Radio.

It could be argued that it is no business of Britain to bother informing the rest of the world, but even Lady Thatcher took time off from her Beeb-bashing to praise and pump additional funds into the World Service, recognising the unquantifiable but undeniable spin-off for Britain from the corporation's global status. The additional benefit, as she would surely see it, was the fact that Arabic Television would have actually earned money for the BBC.

But there have been win-

ners, not least the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC), which transmits a free-to-air satellite service from Battersea in London to a huge audience across the Middle East, North Africa and a fair slab of Europe. It is owned by a branch of the Saudi royal family and it is, to say the least, a well-behaved operation when it comes to observing the Saudi view of media freedom.

But there has been another unexpected, more laudable, winner. While BBC Arabic Television itself may be dead, its editorial spirit, its style and even some of its programmes live on — transmitted from the tiny Gulf state of Qatar, which incidentally is also about to begin FM rebroadcasting of BBC Arabic Radio.

Al Jazeera (Island) Satellite Television went on air from Doha at the beginning of last November, staffed chiefly by former members of BBC Arabic Television. While Al Jazeera Television's audience is still modest, its programme subjects are controversial, its interviewing techniques robust, and it is remarkably free of editorial interference.

The question yet to be answered is: Will a wider success, or perhaps a political crisis in the Gulf, bring with it the need to trim its editorial sails? But then, who can say the same sort of question hasn't sometimes been asked of the BBC?

The author, who was the Arabic Television newsroom's managing editor, left the BBC in August last year after 27 years with World Service News and Current Affairs. He now runs Richardson Media Services Ltd. The article above is reprinted from *The Independent*.

## Ibrahim Bakr — champion of justice

Yesterday the death of Ibrahim Bakr was commemorated at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, in Amman. The following article, written by Lamis Andani, is reprinted from the *Middle East International*.

ON FEB. 15, Ibrahim Bakr, an outstanding lawyer and politician, died of cancer, leaving a real void in Jordanian and Palestinian political life. A relentless defender of human rights and an uncompromising advocate for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict which would combine peace with justice, Bakr was an exemplary fighter for human dignity.

Although he was one of the top lawyers in the Arab World, serving for many years as adviser to the Arab Bank, he gave his services to victims of repression. In the 1950s, as a young lawyer, he challenged Jordanian military rule by representing opposition leaders. In 1964, he was one of the founders of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, while his courage and sharp insight established him as one of the most prominent leaders in the



Ibrahim Bakr

West Bank. Israel deported him to Jordan shortly after its occupation, where he continued his law practise

and political involvement.

In the 1970s, Bakr became the first and only vice chairman of the PLO, despite of his continuous disagreements with Yasser Arafat. His principled style clashed with Arafat's autocratic leadership. Bakr quit, but remained a member of the Palestine National Council until his death.

His commitment to the Palestinian cause did not prevent him from playing a pivotal role in Jordanian politics. In the '70s and '80s Bakr took up the cases of political activists, writers and trade unionists.

Although he has never belonged to a political party, he was highly respected by all Jordanian and Palestinian political groups, who often sought his advice, guidance and support. He vehemently opposed the Oslo accords and joined the Conference for Return, a nascent diaspora movement which is attempting to redefine Palestinian national rights.

In one of the most critical stages of Palestinian history Bakr will be missed, but not only by Palestinians. He leaves a vacuum in the struggle for political freedom.

## Kiev sees new reactors as key to Chernobyl, future

KUZNETSOVSK, Ukraine (R) — Workers have already planted trees around a new reactor at Ukraine's Rivne nuclear plant, the completion of which would help pave the way for the shutdown of Chernobyl.

President Leonid Kuchma has promised to close Chernobyl, site of the world's worst nuclear accident, by the turn of the century in return for billions of dollars of Western cash to complete various projects, including two new nuclear reactors.

But it is not clear when the plants — reactor No 4 at Rivne and No 2 at Khmelnytsky in western Ukraine — will actually open.

The two units are 80-85 per cent built but doubt has crept into plans for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to manage the financing.

"Without these two reactors it would be very hard to close Chernobyl by 2000. We cannot lose any electricity in our energy balance. Chernobyl must be replaced," Environment Minister Yuri Kostenko told Reuters.

Up to 300 workers are working on the reactor which looms to the height of a 16-storey building at the edge of Kuznetsovsk near Rivne, some 370 km west of the capital, Kiev.

The interior has been freshly painted but the lifts are not working at the plant, where construction began in 1985 — a year before the Chernobyl disaster.

In 1991 parliament, confi-

dent after winning independence from Moscow, announced a moratorium on building new reactors.

"We did not stop building despite the moratorium — we did it under cover of so-called conservation of the reactor," said Volodymyr Steshenko, Rivne's chief spokesman. "Of course we were lying. But we believed the moratorium was a stupid idea though it looked like a temporary step."

"If there were no Chernobyl our fourth reactor would have started working long ago. Or if there were still a Soviet Union... the communists would have hinged thousands of workers and order them to work day and night."

Rivne's first reactor was built in 1980 and a second one a year later. Both are VVER-440s, a design which would contain the impact of the kind of chain reaction which blew the roof off Chernobyl's rbnk-type reactor in April 1986.

The third unit was completed months after the Chernobyl blast blew contamination across much of Europe. The plan was to build a total of six reactors at Rivne but now only the fourth one has a real chance of completion.

Ukraine is relying on EBRD funding to complete Rivne-4 and Khmelnytsky-2 but the process has been complicated by a report by an international panel of experts which said completing the reactors did not meet

bank requirements as a financial project.

Rivne-4 needs an additional \$300 million — Ukraine has already spent some \$450-470 million. Khmelnytsky-2 needs some \$470 million, due to come partly from the EBRD and partly from the European Commission's Euroatom Nuclear Fund.

John Surrey, the chairman of the EBRD panel, told the British Broadcasting Service's Ukrainian service that EBRD money should be spent to make district heating systems, hospitals and other public buildings more efficient.

"We think that power shortage, power cuts are unacceptable for the people of Ukraine. We saw the hardship... You don't need it," he said. "We believe that it is very important to reinforce the transmission and distribution system in Ukraine to reduce the power losses."

But Mr. Kostenko said installing energy-saving technologies and renovating public buildings would take decades, while Chernobyl could be replaced in three years.

The panel also said it would be better to modernise Ukraine's thermal stations, which produce about half of its electricity.

"The commission's conclusions were not properly motivated, they were groundless. They were based on statistics which were not based on the real state of Ukraine's energy sector, especially at

thermal power stations," Yuri Poluneyev, EBRD's Ukrainian director, told reporters.

"Because of ageing equipment at thermal stations 40 per cent of electricity has been lost. Even after modernisation a lot of electricity and money will be wasted," he added.

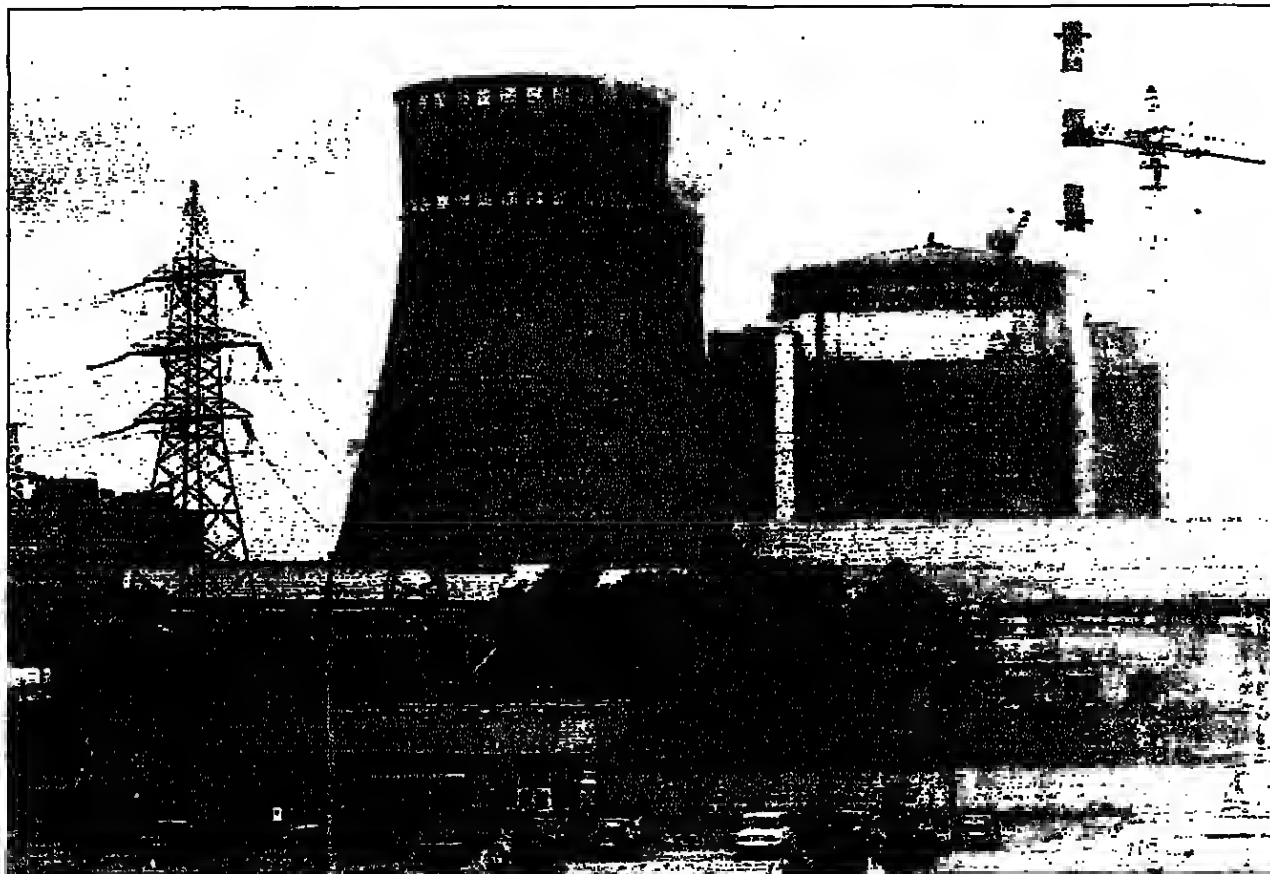
The bank had already had a negative experience in dealing with nuclear power, as Slovakia's Mochovce plant. A project to construct a plant there was shelved after objections by environmental groups and neighbouring Hungary.

"Also they (the panel) wanted to be very careful with these two reactors. They are under pressure from 'Green' organisations in Europe," Mr. Poluneyev said.

It is still unclear when the EBRD will decide on the loan but almost everyone at Rivne is sure that the fourth reactor will be completed — sooner or later.

"I will be so happy when we complete this reactor," says Vasyl Andriyevsky, 27, the reactor's future duty officer. "It is so stupid to waste such efforts. The destruction of this reactor would be more difficult and expensive than its completion."

"With only one reactor my people feel they have no future," said Viktor Saponov, head of Khmelnytsky plant, said. "No new reactors would mean a big blow to our nuclear industry."



The overall view of the Rivne nuclear plant. The completion of a fourth reactor building at this plant would help pave the way for the shutdown of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant (Reuters photo)

## Ex-Soviet allies finding export markets in the West

By Andrzej Stylinski  
The Associated Press

OSTROW MAZOWIEC-KA, Poland — Furniture from the Forte Sa factory looks attractive by any standard: design, craftsmanship, price.

The shelves, cabinets and desks for home and office have found a ready market in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and other Western European countries, evidence of the growing popularity of Polish furniture abroad.

Similar export successes are occurring across Eastern Europe, where market-driven competition was thrust on locals after Communist central planning collapsed in the early 1990s. Businesses had to adopt to new norms for quality and efficiency just to survive.

Czech beer and cars, Hungarian light bulbs and salami, Romanian furniture and wines and Polish appliances and ships are among the products finding Western buyers, along with textiles, steel, ceramic products and glass.

Polish exports have almost doubled over the last three years, hitting 73 billion zlotys (\$24.4 billion) in 1996. Poland now sells more furniture abroad than coal, its principal export earner in the Communist era.

Still, Poland and other East European countries are importing more high quality goods than they are selling. Poland's trade deficit last year totaled \$8.1 billion, while the Czech Republic's amounted to \$5.7 billion and Hungary's was \$3.1 billion.

Countries in the region have a "sound basis and good prospects" for expanding their exports,

said Paul Knotter, the World Bank representative in Warsaw. But more investment, new technologies and government economic discipline is still needed.

"There is a long way to go in terms of quality and standards, although a lot of progress has been made," Mr. Knotter said.

As a joint venture with a German manufacturer, Forte Sa is a prime example of how Polish entrepreneurship can thrive with the right Western backing and marketing connections.

Forte sold \$27 million worth of goods, 36 per cent of its production, in the West in 1995.

The company was formed in 1992 when an upholsterer named Maciej Formanowicz joined with Germany's Alno, a kitchen cabinet maker, to take over a decrepit state factory in Ostrow, paying off its 6 million zlotys (\$3 million) debt.

"I'm a typical self-made man," said Mr. Formanowicz, 48, the craftsman-turned-corporate chairman, who owns 30 per cent of the company with 2,500 employees.

"Export forces us to constantly struggle," he said in an interview at company headquarters.

Zofia Gaber, head of Agros Holding Sa, another Polish company that has prospered in the market economy, agrees.

"Having a presence on foreign markets forces you to seek better quality," she said.

During Communist times, individual factories could not sell their products or buy supplies abroad. Agros was one of a few companies created to act as middlemen. After 1990, when trade was

opened up, Agros found new ways to use its expertise.

"Thirty years of experience in international markets gave us understanding in how the market system functions and we also made a lot of contacts," Ms. Gaber said.

Now Agros owns 20 companies involved in food production, processing and trade, with sales of 1 billion zlotys (\$330 million) in 1995. About a quarter is exports, mostly to the European Union, where the company is well-known for apple concentrate, frozen strawberries, vegetable and fruit preserves, candy and Polish vodka.

"In our line of produce, we have a good European quality and at the same time somewhat lower costs," said Ms. Gaber. However, "it is still too early for our fully processed goods to enter the EU."

The European Union's high tariffs, minimum prices and import quotas will limit trade from East Europe until at least 2002, when countries of the former Soviet trading bloc hope to join the EU.

Pick and Herz, two Hungarian companies, say they could sell more salami and sausages in Western Europe if it were not for trade barriers.

Pick, founded 128 years ago in the city of Szeged, currently fills 90 per cent of Hungary's 6,800-tonne EU salami quota. But high tariffs block more sales by Pick and its competitor, Herz.

East European businessmen and politicians contend the doors to their markets are now opened wide to Western goods, but the EU isn't reciprocating.

"We do not interpret the (trade) deficit only in terms of the capability of our economy to succeed on Western markets," Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus said March 6. "We interpret it also as a result of surviving barriers... And EU subsidies, especially in agricultural products."

Many companies have learned that selling in the West requires good promotion and advertising.

"You can have the best product in the world but won't get far if no one knows about it," said Bela Gaal, director at the Hungarian Agrarian Marketing Centre.

But few East European exporters can afford expensive advertising campaigns so they look for networks and partners.

Zelmer, a leader in kitchen and home appliances in Poland, sells in the West under discount brand names, its export manager, Zbigniew Kedzia, said.

The company decided in 1990 to spend money "on the most modern technology instead of advertising its brand name," he said. "This will allow us to earn money for promotion later."

Booming exports and economic growth also are fueled by foreign investment. Last year, foreign companies invested \$5.2 billion in Poland. Much of the capital infusion goes to refurbish or build plants that produce goods for export as well as for the domestic market.



## Iraq needs \$30b investment to reinvigorate oil industry

NICOSIA (R) — Iraq will need \$30 billion to rehabilitate and further develop its dormant oil industry over a 10-year period once United Nations sanctions against it are lifted, an Iraqi official has said.

"It is a conservative estimate that \$30 billion is required by the Iraqi oil industry over a period of 10 years," said Faleh Al Khayat, director general of planning at the ministry of oil in Baghdad.

"We think approximately \$15 billion will easily be obtained on a production sharing formula. If the remaining figure cannot be raised through financial arrangements as contracts paid by incremental production then it will be put on the national priority list," he added.

Mr. Khayat, addressing an industry conference in Nicosia, said a priority for the Iraqi government was to reach a capacity of 3.5 million barrels per day (bpd).

"The second phase is to increase capacity to 6.0 million barrels per day and sustain it in cooperation agreements with foreign companies," he said.

Iraq has been under U.N. sanctions since its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The trade curbs place a blanket ban on its oil exports and investments in the country.

Mr. Khayat said direct government financing was preferred to develop and rehabilitate the oil industry, but said that it would be in competition with pressing civilian infrastructure projects which made foreign

participation necessary.

The Iraqis have earmarked the fields of Majnoon, West Qurna (second stage), Bin Umar, Nasiriyah, Halfaya, Ratawi, Gharaif, Al Ahadad, Tuba and Rafidain as designated to be developed by shared effort with foreign companies, Mr. Khayat said.

Between them the 10 fields have an estimated production rate of 2.6 million bpd.

"Any foreign investment application will be handled on a case-by-case basis," he said.

Mr. Khayat said the current capacity of Iraq is 2.5 million bpd. "This can increase to 3.0 million barrels per day after a few months of lifting the embargo."

## Saudis need over \$116b for power expansion

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia is expected to pump more than \$116 billion into power expansion projects to meet its growing consumption in the long-term, its industry and electricity minister has said.

Hashim Al Yamani said the funds would be invested as part of a 25-year development plan that takes into consideration a rapid growth in the Gulf kingdom's population and a steady expansion in the industrial sector.

"Studies have shown the total investments needed for that plan would reach around 438 billion riyals (\$116.8 billion)," he told a conference here on energy and infrastructure in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

He said the funds included nearly 237 billion riyals (\$63.2 billion) and the rest covered linkage of networks and distribution of supplies.

The 1995-2020 plan will be partly financed by the private sector, which is set to spearhead economic activities over the coming years as Riyadh is planning major reforms to offset oil price fluctuations.

Mr. Yamani said the plan would increase the number of subscribers to nearly seven million from three million at present. Capacity will also rise to about 69,520 megawatts in 2020 from 19,662 megawatts currently.

He said the study projected the population would grow to around 38.3 million at the end of the plan from nearly 18 million at present.

"After providing generous subsidies to the electricity sector since it was established, the government now believes this sector can sustain itself through the use of modern techniques of management and financing," Mr. Yamani said.

"Actually, this sector has successfully passed the stage of corporatisation and is now ready to enter the stage of commercialisation and then privatisation. The decisions concerning such developments will be taken during the long-term plan, which has a clear basis."

## IMF urges European countries to press on with single currency

WASHINGTON (R) — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has urged Europe to press ahead with plans to launch a single currency in 1999 but warned that the region needed to do more to attack deeply embedded unemployment.

"We are very optimistic that the timetable [for European Monetary Union] can be met," Flemming Larsen, deputy director of the IMF's research department, told reporters at a briefing.

Under the Maastricht treaty, countries wishing to participate in the single currency from the start must strive to reduce their budget deficits to the equivalent of three per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) or below this year.

By the IMF's reckoning, Germany, France and Italy all look set to record deficits equivalent to 3.3 per cent of GDP this year unless they take further measures to trim budgets. GDP measures the total value of goods and services produced within a country's borders.

Moreover, the fund warned that Italy's deficit in particular could jump sharply next year without further action because of the country's "considerable reliance on one-off measures" this year to soak up government red ink.

France's deficit is also expected to rise next year, but more moderately than Italy's, according to the IMF.

Mr. Larsen said it would ultimately be up to politicians to

decide who will participate in the start of monetary union if some nations have deficits slightly above the three per cent level.

"It is critical to get through this period promptly by bringing the project to term within the agreed time frame," the IMF said in a report. "Governments need to follow through on their policy commitments and objectives, in both the fiscal and structural areas."

But that will not be all that easy given the record levels of unemployment across much of Europe.

"Neither prospective growth nor the progress made with labour market reforms gives reason to expect any significant decline in joblessness in the near future," the IMF said.

It forecast that the European Union (EU) unemployment rate would hold steady at 11.3 per cent this year before dropping to 10.8 per cent in 1998. Unemployment in France is expected to exceed 13 per cent by mid-year.

"High unemployment and weak growth could make it difficult for EU members to fully meet the fiscal deficit targets associated with ... monetary union, affect expectations about the likelihood of the project going ahead on time and lead to turbulence in financial markets," it said.

The EU economy is likely to enjoy faster growth this year and next, expanding by 2.4 per cent in 1997 and 2.9 per cent in 1998 after rising 1.6 per cent last year. But uncertainties

remain and that is why further cuts in interest rates by Germany and France cannot be ruled out, the IMF said.

While the drive to launch monetary union is creating many uncertainties and exciting a toll on Europe's economy, the IMF argued that the project would have considerable long-run benefits for the region.

They include greater economic and financial stability, more efficient capital markets and less risk of currency market disturbances among members.

To help ensure the project's success once it starts, fiscal policy will have to play some role in dealing with economic shocks that affect one country but not another, the IMF said.

"In some instances, financial assistance from the EU budget may be warranted, as indicated in the Maastricht treaty, to help a country address severe difficulties caused by exceptional occurrences beyond its control," it said.

But more important than that, according to the IMF, is the critical need for European countries to improve their labour markets.

"There is a continued need to persevere with comprehensive reforms to reduce overly generous levels of unemployment compensation, tighten eligibility criteria, reduce taxes on employment and facilitate not only job search and training but also restructurings and layoffs — and thereby hirings," it said.

REUTERS

REUTERS

### The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLS	FRF
US Dollar	1.7290	0.0163	1.4698	126.00	1.3803	1711.00	1.9450	6.8270	
DE Mark	0.5784	-	0.3562	0.8501	73.21	0.7901	1.1249	3.3700	
GB Sterling	1.6227	2.8052	-	2.3790	204.99	2.2398	2776.44	3.1562	9.4555
CH Franc	0.6804	117.56	0.4188	-	95.10	0.9385	1163.31	132.11	3.9618
JP Yen	0.0079	1.3652	0.4884	1.1605	-	1.0899	13.51	153.57	4.8009
CA Dollar	0.7245	1.2378	0.4407	1.0536	1.09	-	1224.70	1.3927	4.1728
IT Lira	0.0008	1.0102	0.3599	0.0859	1353.18	0.8065	-	11.36	3.4046
NL Guilder	0.5141	88.87	0.3166	75.57	65.04	0.7085	879.47	-	2.9951
FR Franc	0.1710	0.2965	0.1057	25.2153	21.70	0.2368	33.37	33.3700	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7503	0.3770	3.8401	0.3044	3.6728	1539.00	3.3885
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2970	0.5325	5.1414	0.4299	5.1076	2173.73	4.7874
GB Sterling	0.2668	0.1888	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0812	0.98	410.37	0.9038
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8790	9.9477	-	9.86	0.8073	9.74	4082.23	8.9906
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0303	1.0303	-	0.0836	1.01	422.79	0.9311
Kuwait Dinar	3.2857	2.3263	12.3223	1.2387	11.98	-	12.07	5058.68	0.9311
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0211	1.0126	0.9911	0.0829	-	419.03	0.9229
Lebanese/1000	0.85	0.4600	2.4388	0.2450	2.3652	0.1970	2.3865	-	2.2024
Egyptian	0.2850	0.2088	1.1065	0.1112	1.0748	0.0898	1.0836	454.06	-

Energy									
	Brent	W. Texa	Bony	Dubai	UL Gas	SA Riyal	AE Dirham	KW Dinar	BH Dinar
	18.10	18.35	19.55	19.85	18.10	18.35	17.75	192.00	194.00
	18.10	18.35	19.55	19.85	18.10	18.35	17.75	192.00	194.00

Metal Prices									
	Gold (oz's)	Silver (oz's)	Platinum (oz's)	AL (3 Months)	CU (3 Months)	Zinc (3 Months)	Lead (3 Months)	NI (3 Months)	
	340	340.5	471	473	370.7	371.7	1623	1026	2364
	340	340.5	471	473	370.7	371.7	1623	1026	2364

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Cncy	Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year	Period	1-3	3-6	6-9
USD	5.56	5.68	5.67	5.63	5.18				
GBP	6.18	6.31	6.31	6.31	6.59				
JPY	0.53	0.56	0.62	0.62	0.56				
DEM	2.94	3.00	3.00	3.06	3.10				
FRF	3.18	3.34	3.42	3.42	3.44				
CHF	1.57	1.58	1.75	1.88	1.58				
ITL	8.92	8.81	8.75	8.68	8.70				

Main Equity Indices									
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr/Cls		
New York	DOW JONES	7071.2	94.72	1.36	7077.92	6976.88	6979.48		
New York	S&P 500	812.97	14.44	1.81	812.99	798.53	798.53		
London	FT-SE 100	4455.6	10.6	0.24	4468.4	4423.5	4445		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	19814.75	239.42	1.24	19818	19187.7	19275.3		
Paris	CAC 40	2655.31	15.85	0.6	2662.26	2634.71	2639.46		
Frankfurt	DAX	3460.37	22.3	0.65	3460.37	3448.66	3438.07		

Energy									
Commodity	Last	Delivery							
Coffee (c/lbs)	245.75	Spot							
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1397	Spot							
Sugar (\$/ton)	314	Spot							
Wheat (\$/ton)	178	Spot							
Soya (c/lbs)	24.22	Spot							
Tea (stg/kg)	152	Spot							
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot							
Rice (\$/ton)	480	Spot							

### THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

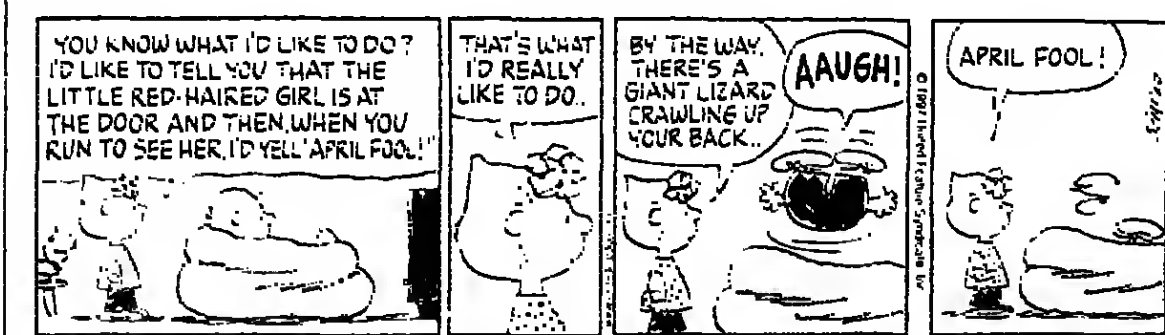
1 Magnet end  
5 Soccer score  
9 European neighbor  
13 Bakery come-on  
15 "Clair de lune"  
16 Alan or Cheryl  
17 Type of protest  
18 Volcanic mount  
19 Beggar's petition  
20 Scorn of the unattainable  
22 Children's game  
23 Nav. off.  
24 City in Italia  
25 Fit for consumption  
28 Big Apple sch.  
29 Have an inclination  
31 Famous Ali  
34 Abound  
36 — out (hit the limit)  
39 Sir Laurence  
41 With deftness  
43 Smooth fabric  
44 Actress Anderson  
46 Capri, for one  
47 More upright  
49 Circle piece  
51 Black Sea port  
53 Odense native  
55 — Alamos  
58 Broadcast  
59 Darling  
62 Boot tips  
64 Munich mister  
65 Roomy  
66 Author Ferber  
67 "— saw Elba"  
68 Buffalo  
69 Mr. Fox  
70 Withered  
71 Camp item

DOWN

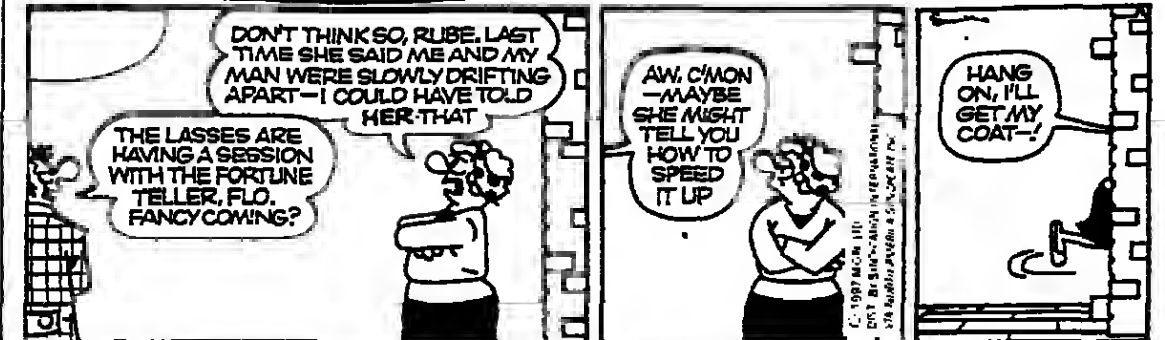
1 Outmoded  
2 Heavenly hunter  
3 Yoga pose  
4 Mideastern potentate  
5 Flash of light  
6 Run faster  
7 Boleyn or Bancroft  
8 Rent payer  
9 Swiss peak  
10 Steep-roofed houses  
11 Perfect  
12 Proverb  
14 Incensed  
21 Path or passage  
26 A Moore  
27 Type of print  
28 Armadas  
30 To — (unanimously)  
31 Derek and Diddy  
32 Pie — mode  
33 Unhappy conclusion  
35 Gardner of mystery  
37 Building annex  
38 Coloring agent  
40 Travel stops  
42 Titan  
45 Restaurant patron, at times  
48 Bathrobe belts  
50 Certain building, briefly  
51 Cowboy flick  
52 Electron tube  
54 Eagle's home  
55 Run out  
56 Synthetic fabric  
57 Surgical insert  
60 "The Way We..."  
61 Send off  
63 Blue

by Diane C. Baldwin

### Peanuts



### Andy Capp



### Mutt'n'Jeff



### HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR MONDAY, MAY 5, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) Don't allow anyone to interfere with your desires today to use your creative talents. You should not take any risks or jeopardize later this evening your safety in any way, especially while on the highway.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) If you've made plans today for an activity with your family, changing them at this late date could cause considerable discord at home with your loved ones. Later this evening you can meet with close friend at recreational activities.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 20) Get your shopping and errands completed early today, even if they are a little harder than you thought. Take care of important communications concerning your career activities, especially those from bigwigs.

**MOON CHILDREN:** (June 22 to July 21) You can get some fine results today if you follow the suggestions of a financial advisor who can increase your income level. Pursue an important personal desire later this evening and you can be quite successful.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) Labour on increasing your appearance today, then get out socially later this evening for a great time with close friends. You should not let anyone ruin your wonderful mood with negative ideas and suggestions which are useless.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) A covert activity requires your immediate attention today, so get at it first thing this morning. Show your mate you are loyal and devoted by doing some special romantic activity which he or she will very much appreciate.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) A close friend who is usually quite supportive to you is busy today, so be more self-reliant and thereby you can become quite successful. Enjoy a favourite hobby later this evening so that you can relax for the days ahead.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) If you want to meet with a powerful person today, the evening is the best time for this. Be sure to obey all rules and regulations which apply to you concerning your career activities, thereby you can get out of difficult situations.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) You should not try to drop in on anyone unexpectedly today, as they would not appreciate the surprise, if you pay a visit, make an appointment so that you won't be embarrassed. Later this you can stay home with loved ones.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) You should not expect or insist on much attention from your mate during the day today, as this person is very busy, however, the evening should be romantic, so surprise him or her and he or she will be quite appreciative.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) You can get out of an unsatisfactory arrangement today with a fellow associate if you use some tact and humour. You should not risk your reputation later this evening by doing something which will get you in a difficult situation.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) Your career activities may begin on an unhappy note this morning, however, muddle through and you can accomplish a great deal by the end of the day. Later this evening you can seek out knowledgeable person and seek their advice.

Birthstone of May: Emerald Citrine



## Japan suffers first post-war failure in life insurance sector

Iranian delegation that all matters that impede the ratification of the protocol have been solved, and the signing will take place next October." Dr. Samdi was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying.

Last year's trade negotiations brought the two sides to three major agreements:

"We had thought we could handle the situation through restructuring efforts, but the situation did not allow us to," Mr. Yonemoto said.

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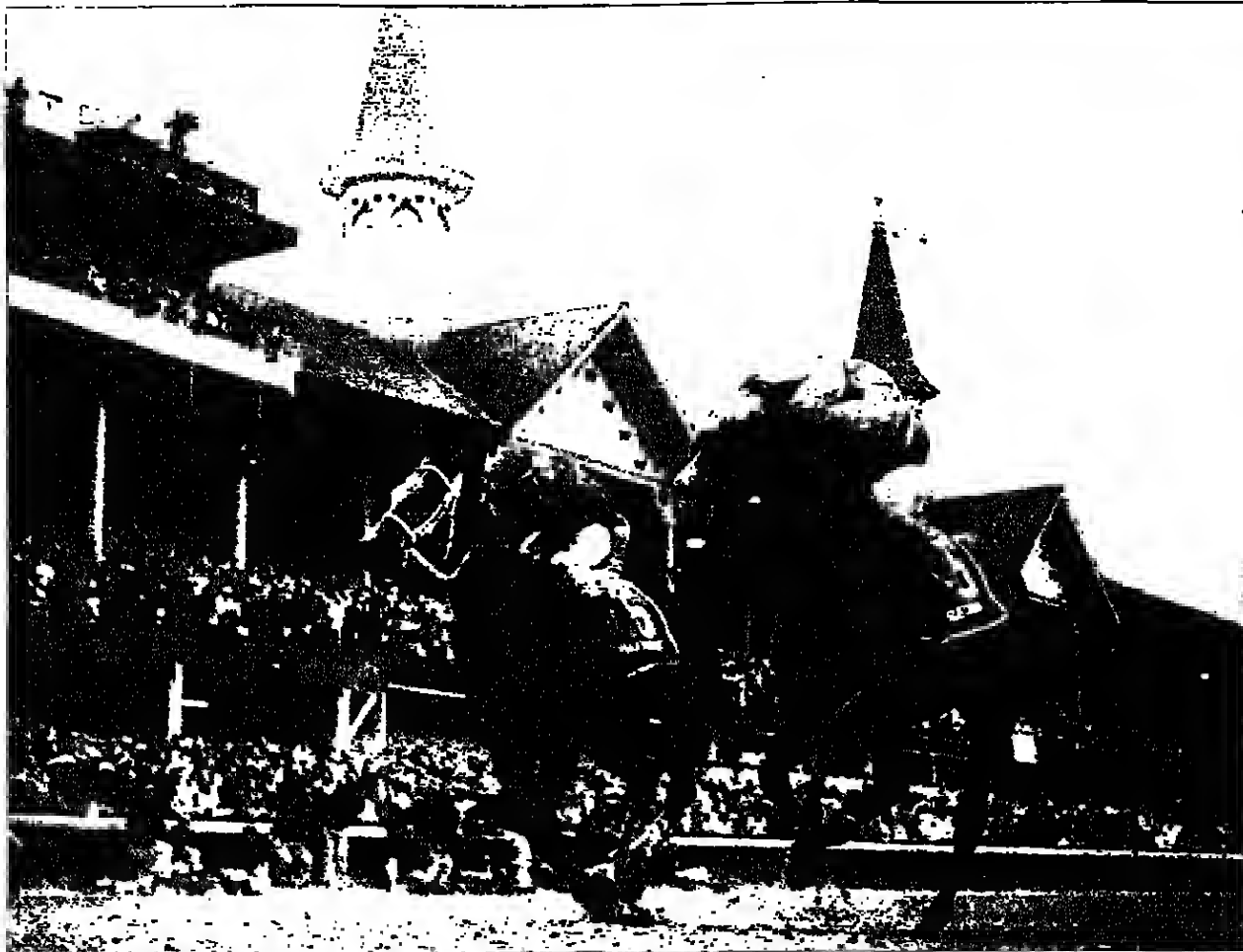
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Silver Charm (R) wins the 123rd running of the Kentucky Derby with jockey Gary Stevens riding, edging out Captain Bodgit (L) with jockey Alex O Solis riding, at Louisville's Churchill Downs (Reuters photo)

## Silver Charm wins 123rd Kentucky Derby

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky (R) — Silver Charm, the California-based second choice, held off favored Captain Bodgit down the Churchill Downs stretch on Saturday to win a stirring duel and the 123rd Kentucky Derby by a head.

Free House finished third in the first leg of thoroughbred horse racing's triple crown.

Ridden by Gary Stevens, who just last week was inducted into racing's Hall of Fame, the Bob Baffert-trained horse took the lead from Free House as the horses came thundering down the most famous home stretch in American horse racing.

The victory erased Baffert's disappointing memory of defeat last year, when he saddled Cannovier, who finished second to Grindstone after a similar stretch battle and a photo finish.

Baffert said he thought he had the \$1 million race won as the horses raced toward the finish. "But I saw Captain Bodgit coming and I thought, please Lord don't do it to me again. My whole body was numb."

Stevens, after recording his third Kentucky Derby victory, said he had a "dream trip on a dream week."

"Bob turned me loose today," Stevens said of Baffert.

Stevens said when Silver Charm got the lead, he relaxed until he heard Captain Bodgit moving up and the horse then "stuck his ears back, flattened his



Silver Charm's jockey Gary Stevens holds the trophy in the air in the winner's circle after winning the 123rd Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs in Louisville (Reuters photo)

head out and found another gear.

"It felt like we could have gone around again and nobody was going to get by him," marvelled Stevens, who previously won the Derby aboard Winning Colors in 1988 and rode longshot Thunder Gulch to victory in 1995.

The classic race for three-year-olds over 1 1/4 miles was run on one of the coldest Derby days in 40 years with a post-time temperature of 53-degrees (11.6 C).

Still the fourth largest Derby crowd in history of 141,198 made the best of it, wrapping themselves in plastic over traditionally

outrageous hats and huddling under the grandstands to avoid a cold wind and scattered showers.

But when the horses rounded the turn with a quarter-mile to go in the race, the crowd forgot the weather and let out a mighty roar.

Silver Charm had lost to free house in the Santa Anita Derby last month, but blew by him down the stretch Saturday.

"We lost the battle," Stevens said of the earlier setback, "but won the war." Free House, with David Flores in the saddle, led for much of the race.

"I didn't expect to be in the lead early," Flores said. "It was like nobody wanted to go. He responded when I asked him turning for home but those two other horses were just too strong." Flores said of Silver Charm and Captain Bodgit.

Free House, a 10-1 shot, finished 3 1/2-lengths behind Captain Bodgit.

Captain Bodgit's jockey, Alex Solis, said he had "chirped" to the horse as they rolled toward the final run, "and he responded."

"At the eighth pole I thought we were the winner," Solis recalled, "but when that horse (Silver Charm) saw me, he shifted to another gear."

The Preakness Stakes, second leg of the triple crown, will be run May 17 at Pimlico race track in Baltimore.

## Bordeaux help Monaco win French League

PARIS (R) — Bordeaux helped Monaco win their first French soccer League title since 1988 when they held Paris St. Germain to a 2-2 draw at the Parc Des Princes on Saturday.

The Parisians needed a win to retain slim hopes of challenging the team from the principality, who host Caen on Sunday. Eight points behind Monaco with only two rounds left in the First Division, PSG can no longer close the gap.

It was the sixth title for Monaco, who won their first 36 years ago.

"We will celebrate this title against Caen on Sunday, hoping to give our fans a victory," said Monaco's manager Henri Biancheri.

"I also hope Paris St Germain will win the European Cup Winners' Cup," he added.

The Parisians failed to win the French domestic crown for the third year running but they earned some consolation by making it to the Cup Winners' final for the second time in two years.

"We are the first French team to achieve this and so if we finish second in the League and win our second Cup Winners' Cup, we'll be able to say it was a great season," said PSG president Bernard Brochant.

Despite the draw, the Parisians have the best chance to

finish the league season in second place and to qualify for the European Cup Champions' League next season.

Third-placed Nantes also drew 0-0 at Guingamp and trail Paris St Germain by three points.

Against Bordeaux, who are also seeking a UEFA Cup berth next season, the Parisians had a very difficult time in front of a crowd of 43,000, the league's record this season.

"Before the match, we said it would be like a European Cup match and that's what it was," said Brochant.

The Parisians had an ideal start, opening the scoring in the 14th minute through international Bruno N'Gotty from a free kick.

But PSG slowed down after 30 minutes and veteran Jean-Pierre Papin equalised in the 39th minute from a cross by gifted international midfielder Ibrahim Ba, the game's best player.

Bordeaux even came close to causing a major upset when they took a 2-1 lead thanks to Kaba Diawara with two minutes left. But Brazil's Rai equalised straightaway in a nail-biting finale.

Le Havre, who beat Nice 1-0, and Lens, who defeated Marseille 2-0, made sure they would remain in the First Division next season.

## Rivaldo double strike lifts Deportivo to 3rd

MADRID (R) — Brazilian midfielder Rivaldo lifted Deportivo Coruna into third place in the Spanish league on Saturday after scoring for the sixth successive game in a 3-0 win over struggling Sevilla.

Rivaldo's double strike left Deportivo one point ahead of Real Betis and behind second-placed Barcelona only on goal difference. Betis face Compostela on Sunday, while Barcelona face a tough test at Extremadura on Monday.

Rivaldo headed home a Corentin Martins free-kick to put Deportivo in front in the 18th minute and added a second from the penalty spot 13 minutes from time. Javier Manjarin broke clear shortly afterwards to tie up the match for Deportivo.

In the Spanish capital, the board of Real Madrid appealed for unity ahead of a home game with Sporting Gijon at which supporters are expected to voice their anger at coach Fabio Capello, who has announced he will leave the club at the end of the season.

"We must join our efforts with a single aim: unconditional and constant support of the team, both players and managerial staff," read the communiqué, which was issued on Saturday.

Several real fans have shouted abuse at Capello since Tuesday, when the former AC Milan manager made his decision public.

Capello has not yet disclosed his plans for the future but most commentators feel he is likely to return to struggling Milan.

## Italian Open

### Martinez looks for 5th title as injury sidelines Hingis

ROME (R) — A teenager who fell off her horse in Switzerland must shoulder the blame if this year's Italian Open women's tennis tournament, starting at the Foro Italico Monday, fails to excite the locals.

World No. 1 Martina Hingis, at 16 years old the youngest player ever to hold the top ranking, was to have been the star of an event lacking some major female personalities.

With Silvia Farina Italy's highest-ranked player at number 49, the Swiss teen idol was expected to attract swarms of spectators to a venue that for two weeks becomes the in-place for Rome's beautiful people to be seen.

But the 1996 losing finalist suffered a slight tear of a knee ligament in a riding accident near her Swiss home late last month and will not be gracing the clay courts, shaded by pine trees and a short walk from the Olympic stadium.

Her undoubted pain will have been echoed by groans of disappointment from the organisers, whose top-ranked entrant is now the American World No. 3 Monica Seles.

With or without Hingis, organisers had little hope of arousing as much interest as the better-rewarded men's event which starts the following Monday with all of the world's top 15 players listed as participants so far.

The men's prize money is a total of \$2.3 million compared to just under \$1 million for the women.

Apart from Hingis, Seles was to have been the only woman in the top five participating but organisers responded to the dilution of the field by hastily drafting in Spain's fifth-ranked Arantxa Sanchez as a wild card.

Below her is world number six Conchita Martinez of Spain seeking her fifth



Conchita Martinez

Italian title in a row.

Other leading seeds will be Germany's Anke Huber, Croatia's Iva Majoli and Romanian Irina Spilaea.

If Martinez does win, she will equal Chris Evert's record of five Italian titles, although the Spaniard already holds the record for consecutive victories.

But statistics alone do not fire up crowds and there is no denying that the bigger names are elsewhere.

No. 2 Steffi Graf, who returned to Rome in 1996 for the first time in nine years only to be beaten by Hingis in the quarter-finals, is staying away again this time.

The German, out since February with a knee injury, is due to return at the German Open in Berlin May 12 after training in Austria. Hingis is also expected to be there.

Argentina's Gabriela

Sabatini, a four times winner adopted by the Rome fans as one of their own, was an even bigger attraction who will be much missed due to retirement.

Her role as crowd favourite is sure to be banded on to former American teenage prodigy Jennifer Capriati, whose Italian surname alone is a bankable guarantee that her opponents will get a hard time from the excitable fans.

Seles, who beat now retired Martina Navratilova for the title in 1990, and world number 27 Capriati are both returning to the Italian capital for the first time in many years and have both suffered injuries in recent months.

It will be Seles' first match in the capital since 1992, the year before she was stabbed on court in Hamburg by a knife-wielding spectator during a break between games.

## Stoltenberg, Filippini reach ATT Challenge final as Chang, Agassi, Courier eliminated

ATLANTA (R) — Seventh seed Jason Stoltenberg avoided the fate of his fellow seeds by holding off upset-minded Swede Magnus Norman to reach the final of the ATT Challenge against Marcelo Filippini of Uruguay.

Norman had picked off the highest remaining seed in his two previous matches, but failed in his bid for a hat trick as the

seventh-seeded Australian prevailed 6-4, 5-7, 6-3.

Filippini, ranked 92nd in the world, upset eighth-seeded American Chris Woodruff 7-5, 3-6, 6-4 in the longest match of the tournament at two hours and 22 minutes.

In a tournament that featured American stars Michael Chang, Jim Courier and Andre Agassi, organisers are surely shocked by a

Stoltenberg-Filippini final. But the top six seeds were eliminated before the semifinals, with 81st-ranked Norman taking care of Agassi (4) and Petr Korda (5).

Stoltenberg took advantage of Norman's relative inexperience, using his penetrating forehand to score key breaks in winning the first set.

Norman, 20 and coolly

confident, rebounded from a 1-3 deficit to take the second set 7-5 when Stoltenberg made a rare forehand error.

Stoltenberg, winner of two career clay titles in the United States, regained the edge in the third set, winning the match by breaking Norman with a backhand return up the line.

"It was an up and down match but I'm proud of the way I hung in there,"

Stoltenberg said.

"I gusted it out and that's exactly what I needed at this stage of my comeback," added Stoltenberg, who had wrist surgery in January.

Woodruff's fortunes turned at 4-4 in the first set when a drop shot bounced on the netcord and fell back on his side, wiping out a break point and a chance to serve for the set.

Instead it was Filippini,

hitting consistently from the baseline, who broke for the set at 7-5.

Woodruff got a quick break at the start of the second set and seemed to take charge, breaking Filippini again to level the match.

The American grabbed a 2-1 in the third set before suddenly losing focus in strong winds and changing light conditions as the sun appeared and disap-

peared behind clouds.

Filippini won 12 straight points to take a 4-2 lead before Woodruff recovered, but it was too late to salvage the match.

Woodruff saved two match points at 5-3, but Filippini made good on the third with a backhand winner up the line.

"Between 2-1 in the third set and the end of the match I stopped complaining about the wind and started concentrating

more," said Filippini, who will go for his fourth career title on clay Sunday.

Woodruff refused to blame his lapses on the difficult conditions. "The problems were more in my head than anything else," he said.

"It took me a while to believe I could play with a true clay courtier. I got off to a bad start and I was hanging in there after that."

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	Richard Gere ...in	Michael Douglas & Val Kilmer ... in	Top Disney production 101 DALMATIANS	CONCORD "1"	
	PRIMAL FEAR	THE GHOST & THE DARKNESS	Shows: 12:30, 3:15, 5:00, 6:30 Demi Moore ... in STRIPTEASE	Keanu Reeves...in CHAIN REACTION	
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD "2"	The political satire AMN YA HO For reservations call 625155
				Michael Jordan...in SPACEJAM	
				Shows: 3:30, 6:00	



## Sonics beat Suns in 5th game to advance

SEATTLE (R) — David Wingate and Seattle's trio of all-stars stepped up in the big game to carry the SuperSonics into the second round of the NBA playoffs with a decisive 116-92 victory over the upstart Phoenix Suns Saturday.

Wingate scored eight of his playoff career-high 19 points in the fourth quarter to help the defending Western Conference champions avoid an embarrassing first-round exit for the third time in four years.

All-Stars Detlef Schrempf scored 24 points, Shaw Kemp added 21 and Gary Payton 19 for the Sonics, who were forced to win the final two games of the best-of-five series to survive after the Suns took a surprising fifth game to one lead.

"I think mentally we have gained something from this series," said Seattle coach George Karl. "Mentally I think we're tougher."

Seattle opened a 22-point halftime lead, then withstood a furious third-quarter rally by Phoenix to win the decisive fifth game of the series.

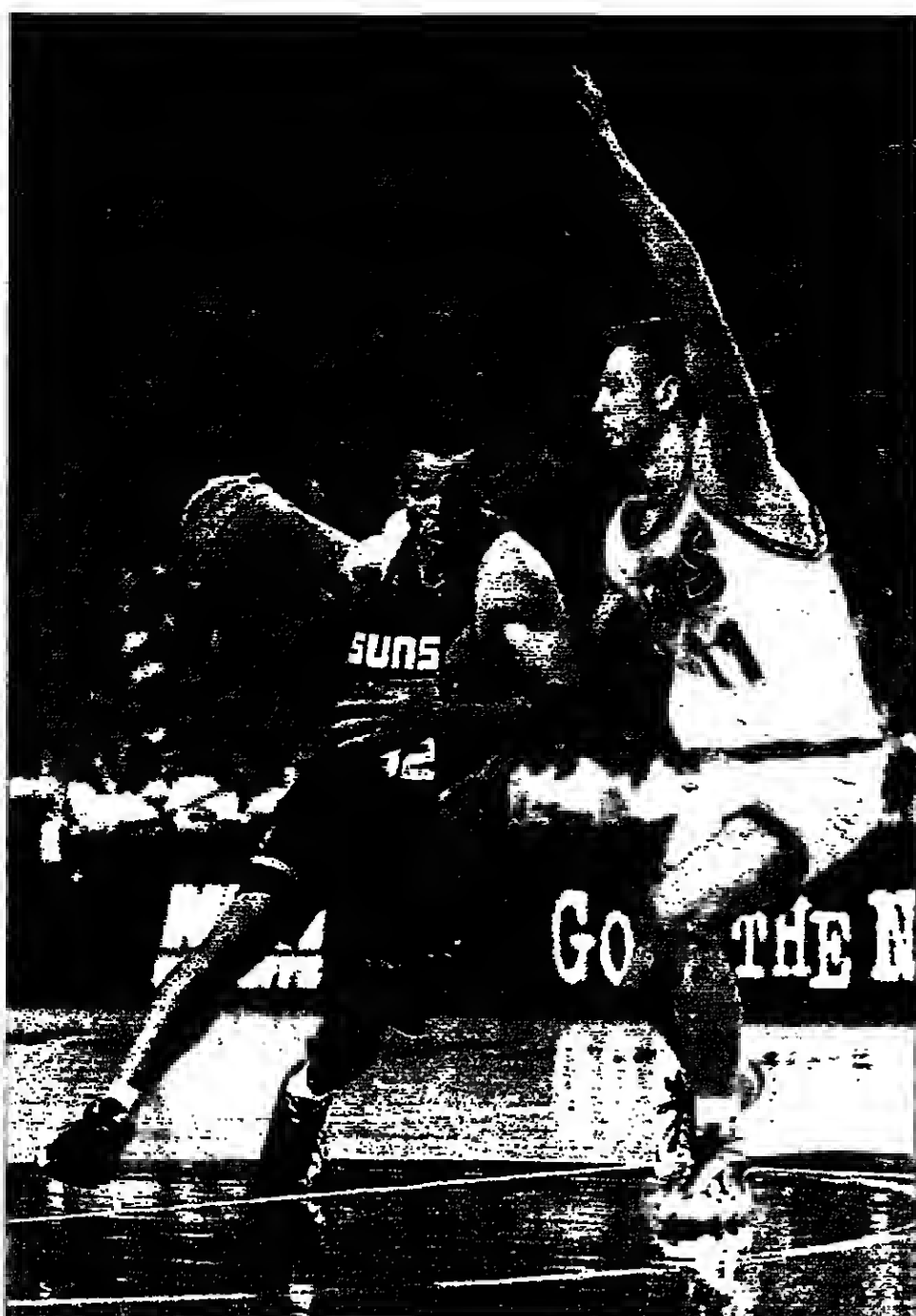
Wingate was the surprise hero, stepping in for injured Nate McMillan and playing one of the best games of his career.

In 21 minutes, Wingate hit 6-of-7 from the field and grabbed 10 rebounds for the Sonics, who went all the way to the NBA finals last year before falling to the Chicago Bulls.

"We're still looking forward to playing Michael (Jordan) in the finals," Kemp said.

Seattle advanced to a meeting with the Houston Rockets in the best-of-seven Western Conference semifinals, beginning on Monday.

"There's only two things disappointment and relief



Phoenix Suns guard Jason Kidd attempts to drive past Seattle SuperSonics Detlef Schrempf during fourth quarter action in game five of the first round NBA playoffs in Seattle. The Sonics eliminated the Suns, 116-92 to advance to the next round against Houston (Reuters photo)

in the NBA," said a relieved Karl. "We get to be relieved for about 12 hours and then we get to go to work against Houston."

The Rockets beat Seattle three times during the regular season and will be seeking to avenge a sweep at the hands of the Sonics in last year's Conference semifinals.

Wesley Persso scored 26 points to lead the Suns, who had a chance to close out Seattle at home in game four, but lost in overtime. Phoenix never seemed able to make a serious run at the lead in game five, despite outscoring Seattle 32-18 in the third quarter.

Person's three-pointer that opened the fourth quarter pulled the Suns within 81-76. But Wingate and Schrempf each hit three-pointers and Wingate added an easy layup on an inbound pass for an 89-76 lead as Seattle again pulled away.

Kemp pulled down 11 rebounds and Payton had 10 assists for Seattle, which shot 50 percent (41-of-82) from the field and held a 43-35 rebounding edge. The Sonics' reserves also outscored the Phoenix bench 37-10.

Suns star guard Kevin Johnson scored 20 points in what was likely his final

NBA game, and Jason Kidd chipped in 17.

The 31-year-old Johnson, who has said he would retire at the end of the season, went down shooting. But he was only 8-for-27 and hurt the team with nine consecutive misses in the second half.

Suns coach Danny Ainge, who took over after the team got off to a miserable 0-13 start and led the club into the playoffs, put an optimistic spin on the defeat.

"I think that the franchise has made a giant step forward so that we can legitimately contend next year," Ainge said.

## Kasparov builds slight edge against chess computer

NEW YORK (R) — World chess champion Garry Kasparov built an advantage out of the opening in the first game on Saturday of his \$1.1 million re-match against the world's strongest chess-playing computer.

The Russian grandmaster, playing with the white pieces and the first move against IBM's supercomputer Deep Blue, set out to exploit the machine's inability to plan far ahead by restricting the number of squares it could control.

"Deep Blue made some sensible moves in the opening, but then it made some moves that could give it problems in the long term," said U.S. grandmaster Patrick Wolff.

Other experts observing the game in a high-rise office complex in the center of Manhattan said Kasparov had given Deep Blue few targets to aim at in the opening flurry of moves and had a slight edge.

Deep Blue is an IBM RS/6000 SP parallel processor with specialized microchips for chess.

The contest is part chess match and part research project to help build computers that can make complex, simultaneous calculations at high speeds. Among the applications for the technology developed for Deep Blue are weather forecasting, air traffic control, data mining and molecular dynamics.

In their first match in Philadelphia in February 1996, the computer shocked the chess world by winning the first game, but Kasparov recovered to win the overall contest. The computer's victory was the



World chess champion Garry Kasparov studies the chess board at the start of his match in New York against the IBM supercomputer Deep Blue. The Russian grandmaster will play six games against Deep Blue in a re-match of their first contest in 1996 (Reuters photo)

first time a programme had defeated a reigning world champion in classical chess, in which games can last several hours.

In each game, the players have two hours each to play 40 moves, then one hour each for the next 20 moves and an additional 30 minutes each to complete the game. The winner of the six-game match will receive \$700,000 and the loser \$400,000.

Kasparov strode into the playing room confidently and grinned broadly for the dozens of assembled photographers and TV crews from all over the world. He and the computer's human operator, scientist Hsu Feng-Hsiung, shook hands. Hsu was sitting opposite Kasparov at a wooden chess board, a black video display screen and key-

board at his side. Hsu typed in all the moves on the key-board and played Deep Blue's move on the board.

Before the first move and as the game progressed, Kasparov held his head in his hands in concentration, almost as though he were praying.

"Garry developed his pieces in such a way that there is nothing concrete," international master David Levy of England said. "By doing that he allows the programme to use its own judgement about where to put its pieces and its judgement isn't quite as good as his."

The opening chosen by Kasparov, who is considered by most experts to be the strongest player in the history of the ancient game, is named after Richard Reti, a Czech grandmaster who

played in the 1910s and 1920s. Experts said the theory behind the opening was to control the centre of the board by careful placement of bishops and knights.

Deep Blue, which can examine hundreds of millions of positions per second, calculates at twice the speed it did in the last match, IBM scientists said. More significantly, the software was infused with more chess knowledge by U.S. grandmaster Joel Benjamin.

Chess playing is considered ideal for computers because the game involves a specific number of physical objects governed by simple, clearly defined rules. Information on the contest is carried on the IBM web site WWW.Chess.IBM.Com.

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### Coach Pitch

Petra Tourist 13- Nabli Factory 10  
Orbit 15- Aramex 7  
R.J. 22- Forum Furniture 6

### Kid Pitch

Med Labs 12- Characters 6  
Reinert 11- Marriott 1  
Al Rawnak-Blue Mill — Postponed

### Seniors

Alphacan 25- Epson 15  
Epson 16- Ayyoubi Steel Factory 15

## Giambi homer in 9th lifts A's past Orioles

BALTIMORE (R) — Jason Giambi's smacked a two-run homer off reliever Randy Myers with two outs in the ninth inning to lift the Oakland Athletics to a 4-3 victory over the Baltimore Orioles Saturday.

Myers (0-1) came in to start the ninth and retired the first two batters he faced. Damon Mashore doubled before Giambi hit an 0-1 pitch over the center-field fence for his fourth home run of the season.

It was the first runs allowed this season by Myers, who blew his first save opportunity in 12 chances as Baltimore saw its four-game winning streak end.

In Seattle, Matt Mieske had three hits, including a homer. John Jaha added a three-run shot and Tim Lincecum cracked a grand slam as the Milwaukee Brewers tied a franchise record with 11 extra-base hits in a 17-4 rout of the Mariners.

Mieske had two doubles and a solo blast and Mike Matheny added a pair of doubles to pace the Brewers' 17-hit attack.

Bryce Florie (1-0) tossed 2 1/3 innings of effective relief to outh his first American league win.

In Toronto, a bases-loaded walk to Carlos Delgado with two out in the ninth scored Otis Nixon with the winning run as the

Blue Jays blew a two-run lead in the top half of the inning before recovering for a 6-5 victory over the Minnesota Twins.

In Cleveland, Sandy Alomar singled home pinch-runner Chad Curtis with the winning run to cap a two-run ninth inning as the Indians nipped the Detroit Tigers 7-6.

Since Cleveland moved into Jacobs Field, the Indians are 19-1 against the Tigers at home.

In Kansas City, Tim Lincecum pitched a complete-game eight-hitter and Joe Vitiello had an RBI double in the sixth as the Royals edged the New York Yankees 2-1.

In Chicago, the White Sox split a double header with the Anaheim Angels.

In the opener, Allen Watson pitched seven scoreless innings and Jack Howell and Garret Anderson had RBI doubles to give Anaheim a 3-2 victory.

In the second game, Doug Drabek allowed two hits over seven innings and Ray Durham had a double, homer and three RBI as the White Sox rebounded for a 4-2 win over the Angels.

At Texas, Dean Palmer's two-run single with one out in the bottom of the ninth inning off closer Heathcliff Slocumb gave the Rangers a 7-6 win over the Boston Red Sox.

The Rangers won when trailing after eight innings for the first time in 106 games, dating back to June 28, 1995.

### GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF  
& TAMARA HUSCH  
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#### A DOUBLE CALAMITY

Both vulnerable. South deals.

**NORTH**  
♠ A 6  
♥ 5  
♦ K Q 8 3  
♣ Q 10 9 7 5 2

**WEST**  
♠ Q 9 7 5  
♥ K 10 8 6 2  
♦ J 4  
♣ J 5

**SOUTH**  
♠ K 4 2  
♥ A J 7 3  
♦ A 8 2  
♣ A 8 4

The bidding:

WEST NORTH EAST

1NT Pass 2♠ Pass

3NT Pass 4♠ Pass

Opening lead: Six of ♠

The hand that can be

said about South's bidding and play

of this hand is that they were a

matched set. Both were terrible.

When North jumped to three

clubs in response to partner's one

no trump, South decided that a flat

16 points was a minimum no-trump

opening and hence bid three no

trump. However, ace and king are

notoriously undervalued in the

petal count. South's three noce and

a king actually made the holding

worth considerably more for a suit contract, and at the very least South should have raised clubs. (Our choice would have been a cuebid in support of clubs.) That would almost certainly have led to an easy club slam on this distribution of the cards.

West led a low heart to the queen and ace, and declarer wasted little time in going down. The set of clubs was established at trick two, followed by a club to the jack, queen and king. Back came the nine of hearts, and the defenders realized in four heart tricks to go with the club — down one.

Obviously, East was the danger hand and had to be kept off play, if possible, to prevent a heart lead through the jack. Correct technique was for declarer to cross to the king of diamonds and lead the queen of clubs. Suppose that were to lose to the king. West cannot continue hearts profitably, and declarer can win any other lead in dummy and now run the ten of clubs. As long as the club honors are split, the contract is secured.

As the cards lie, East will cover the queen with the king. Declarer wins with the ace, then exits with a club and a prayer. When West turns up with the jack, all is well and declarer takes in 11 tricks.

Coming soon  
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## Kabila controls three quarters of Zaire; Mobutu will not surrender

Face-to-face meeting achieved nothing but another

POINTE NOIRE (AP) — Zaire's embattled, ailing president met face-to-face Sunday with the rival who has overrun nearly three-quarters of his country — but all they agreed on was to hold another meeting.

President Mobutu Sese Seko did not announce his resignation, as had been expected.

U.N. envoy Mohammad Sahnoun said rebel leader Laurent Kabila had agreed to a cease-fire as a "gesture of goodwill" before the meeting, but it was not clear whether the truce continued or indeed if it had even taken place.

"As a gesture of goodwill, he has ordered his troops to stop their advance on all fronts," Mr. Sahnoun said, reading from a communiqué.

"They would, however, defend themselves and retaliate if they were attacked."

Mr. Kabila's rebels, who already control three-quarters of Zaire, say they are pushing toward the capital, Kinshasa.

At a news conference with a grim Mobutu and a smiling Kabila, Mr. Sahnoun told reporters aboard a South African naval ship docked in the port city of Pointe Noire that South African President Nelson Mandela, who was helping mediate the talks, would convene another meeting in 6 to 10 days to narrow the gap between them.

Mr. Sahnoun said Mr. Mobutu proposed a cease-fire and the creation of a transitional government that would prepare the Central African nation for its first multi-party elections. Mr. Mobutu said he would hand over power to such an elected authority.

But Mr. Kabila, according



Three hundred and sixty five of the 4,000 Rwandan refugees who are stationed at the transitional camp near the Kisangani airport board an Ilyushin plane booked by the HCR to fly them to Kigali, on Sunday. A train brought 2,800 refugees to Kisangani overnight from the Biaro camp which counts some 30,000 refugees (AFP photo)

to the statement read by Mr. Sahnoun, is demanding that the rebel alliance take power as the transitional authority and says Mr. Mobutu must cede power to it.

Mr. Mobutu left the ship without speaking to reporters and was expected to fly back to Kinshasa later in the day. Mr. Kabila was en route to Angola.

Mr. Mandela emphasised that Mr. Kabila had not agreed to a permanent truce.

"The question of a cease-fire is not part of his vocabulary," he said. "What he is concerned with is that negotiations will lead to the end of hostilities."

Mr. Kabila said Friday that he would go to the talks only to secure "Mobutu's exit and the handover of power to the alliance." Otherwise, he said, rebel forces would take the

rest of Zaire within two weeks.

Mr. Mobutu has insisted that he will never bow to Mr. Kabila's demand to resign, but his prostate cancer and international pressure may yet force him to do so.

Sources close to the talks had said that mediators were seeking an agreement in which Mr. Mobutu would step down for health reasons and appoint an interim president until elections could be held. This would allow Mr. Kabila and his forces to peacefully enter Kinshasa.

A White House official, responding to reports that U.S. envoy Bill Richardson was carrying a letter from Mr. Mobutu to U.S. President Bill Clinton saying that he would step down, said Saturday, "I would not read it that way."

Mr. Mobutu did send a letter to the United States last week in which he committed himself to negotiations with the rebels, said the source, speaking on condition of anonymity Saturday.

In Kinshasa, meanwhile, a U.S. official said nine Americans — non-essential staff and dependants of embassy employees — left the city on Saturday as a "precautionary measure" because of the confusion surrounding the peace talks.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Americans took a ferry to neighbouring Congo. Thirty-eight Americans remain at the embassy, including Ambassador Daniel Simpson. Several hundred other Americans remain in Kinshasa.

## Palestinian collaborator says Israel behind 2 Gaza bombs

GAZA (R) — A twenty-five-year-old Gazan told a news conference organised by Palestinian security forces on Sunday he was recruited by Israel to get two militants to carry out suicide attacks to April that killed only the two bombers. Israel called the allegation "a ridiculous lie."

Ibrahim Halabi said he had collaborated with Israeli Shin Bet intelligence officers who gave him the explosives for the two bombings near the Jewish settlements of Kfar Darom and Netzarim in the Gaza Strip on April 1 at the Erez border point.

The two would-be attackers died minutes apart when the explosives they were carrying blew up before the arrival of their intended targets, Israeli school buses, said Halabi, who faces trial in a Palestinian court.

Seven Palestinian taxi passengers were wounded in one blast.

"The explosions were at times different than those set, before the targets arrived, in order to avoid any Israeli casualties," Halabi said, suggesting Shin Bet had rigged the bombs to explode prematurely.

Israel claimed the two bombers had intended to blow up the school buses. Scores of people have been killed in suicide attacks on buses and public places in Israel.

"This is clearly a ridiculous lie," said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesman in a statement. "Israel expects the Palestinian Authority to wage a real battle against terrorism as it promised. Such... fabrications do not reflect a serious intention to fight against terrorism and against the organisational infrastructure behind it," he said.

The Islamic Jihad group, opposed to making peace with Israel, had claimed responsibility for both

blasts. Halabi told reporters he was recruited as an agent for the Israeli Shin Bet security services in 1988 and provided them with information even after the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) took control of Gaza in 1994.

"Captain Binny, whom I had contact with on March 31, set the date, time and place of the two explosions and told me to order the two Islamic Jihad members Abdullah Al Madhoun and Anwar Al Shabrawi to carry them out," he said.

"Anwar and Abdullah did not know of my plans with Captain Binny. They were just two Jihad members who wanted to carry out attacks against Israeli targets."

"They trusted me because my brother Ramez was their senior in the movement and thought I was the contact between them."

Halabi said after ordering

the two bombers to blow themselves up near the settlements, "the bombs exploded prematurely and before the targets arrived."

"I was suspended from the Islamic Jihad movement at the end of 1989 after they suspected me of collaborating with Israel," he said.

Halabi was arrested by PLO intelligence on April 7 for his involvement in the two Gaza bombings. He said he was arrested before Israeli agents paid him for the latest operation.

PLO officials had said they suspected Israeli secret services of carrying out activities in self-rule areas.

On Sunday, Ramadan Shallah, the Damascus-based Secretary-General of the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine, declined comment when asked if Mr. Halabi, a former Jihad member, was collaborating with Israel and led the two suicide bombers to their death.



Ibrahim Halabi speaks during a press conference in the Gaza Strip arranged by the Palestinian National Authority, on Sunday. Halabi said he had collaborated with Israeli security forces in planning the two bombings in the southern Gaza Strip last April 1 (AFP photo)

## Iran may expel Britain's charge d'affaires as spy

TEHRAN (Agencies) — A headline Iranian newspaper on Sunday accused Britain's charge d'affaires here of being a spy for the British intelligence agency MI-6 and said he could be expelled.

Kayhan Havaii weekly, in an article dated Paris quoting "French diplomatic sources," said Jeffrey James had "connections with Britain's foreign intelligence service long before his posting to Tehran."

The weekly, citing a "highly-placed Iranian source," said Mr. James "could be expelled as a person non grata if the information is confirmed."

"Britain must prepare for a strong reaction from Iran" if the charges are verified, the source was quoted as saying.

Britain has been represented here by a charge d'affaires since the two countries reduced the level of diplomatic ties four years ago in a row over the Iranian death sentence against the British author Salman Rushdie.

Mr. Rushdie was condemned to death by Iran's late leader Ayatollah

Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989 after being accused of blaspheming Islam in his novel "The Satanic Verses."

Mr. James is currently in London after being recalled along with other top diplomats of the European Union (EU) posted in Iran in reaction to a German court ruling on April 10 accusing Tehran of terrorism.

The EU decided on Tuesday to send back the diplomats, but suspended the decision after Iran said it would not allow the German ambassador to return here.

Kayhan Havaii regularly publishes controversial reports about foreign and domestic officials.

Iranian newspapers have accused Britain in the past few days of pressing for a headline EU stand against Iran.

Iran criticised Norway on Sunday for restricting trade and declared that it was under the sway of Israel and the United States, Tehran Radio reported.

The criticism followed a statement by the Norwegian government last week that it could not ignore Tehran's human rights violations and

that it would withdraw the special status granted to Iranian imports. Trade between the two countries is negligible.

Tehran Radio quoted Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi as saying that "Norway is heavily under the influence of the policies of international Zionism and America."

Mr. Mohammadi accused Norway of anti-Islamic policies.

Iran and the EU have been embroiled in a deepening row since a German court accused Iranian leaders of ordering the 1992 assassinations of four dissidents at a Berlin restaurant.

All 15 EU nations, except Greece, called home their ambassadors after the April 10 court ruling. The crisis deepened Wednesday when Iran said it would not welcome the return of the German and Danish ambassadors, or rush its own envoys back to EU capitals.

The Dutch government, which holds the EU's rotating presidency, then urged EU members not to send their ambassadors back to Tehran.

## Pope John Paul II to pay historical visit to Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — Pope John Paul II will make the first papal visit to the Middle East since 1964 next weekend when he arrives in Lebanon, home to the region's most important Catholic community.

The Pope, who begins a two-day visit on Saturday, had originally planned to visit Lebanon three years ago but the trip was cancelled after a church bombing, north of Beirut, left 11 worshippers dead.

For his 74th international pastoral visit since his appointment in 1978, Pope John Paul II will find himself in the only country in the Middle East where Christians have an important role in government.

The Christian community of 1.5 million, out of an estimated population of four million, held the lion's share of power in Lebanon until the end of the country's 15-year civil war in 1990.

For many years Lebanon stood as the perfect model for Christian-Muslim peaceful coexistence, before a long-festering factional fighting that sparked a devastating civil war in 1975.

Today Lebanon's Christians, and especially the Maronites — the most important Christian community which allied itself with Israel during the civil war — are becoming increasingly frustrated and marginalised by the pro-Syrian regime.

They are also feeling threatened by the demographic changes in the country, where the Muslim community is growing far more rapidly.

A bitter bout of inter-Christian fighting in 1983 considerably weakened the community, which has left Lebanon's Christians without any truly representative leaders.

Only Cardinal Nasrallah Sleir, patriarch of the Maronite Church, is a figure of national standing and he has relentlessly spoken out against the threat to civil liberties and democracy in the country.

Speaking to AFP last month, Cardinal Sleir described Lebanon's current situa-

tion as "not enviable: its sovereignty and independence are put in jeopardy, and Lebanon cannot make its own decisions."

The Pope has described Lebanon as "more than a country, a message," and during his visit he is due to sign the apostolic exhortation inspired by resolutions taken during the Synod held for Lebanon in Rome in 1995.

The Synod called for Israel's withdrawal from occupied parts of southern Lebanon and for the departure of the 35,000 Syrian troops deployed on two-thirds of the country's territory.

The Pope's call for a Syrian pullout triggered sharp criticism from a number of Muslim leaders, but they have nevertheless welcomed his visit.

They also expressed worries that the Pope's trip to Lebanon could spark a chain reaction similar to that caused by his trip to Poland in the 1980s, where the communist regime later collapsed.

On the other side of the political spectrum, some Christian circles have suggested the Pope's visit might "consecrate" Syria's influence over its tiny neighbour.

Syrian control over Lebanon has grown considerably since the end of Lebanon's civil war with the blessing of the West as a reward for Syrian participation in the U.S.-led coalition that drove Iraqi troops out of Kuwait in 1991.

Despite assurances from the Vatican that the papal visit is only pastoral, it undoubtedly has a political dimension.

As well as religious meetings with all Lebanese Christian and Muslim leaders, the Pope will also meet with President Elias Hrawi, House Speaker Nabih Berri and Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

But the highlight of the visit will be an open-air mass in the heart of war-devastated downtown Beirut to be attended by 250,000 people.

## Egyptian group threatens U.S.

CAIRO (R) — Egypt's most violent militant group said on Sunday it would target American officials if the health of an ill Muslim cleric jailed in the United States worsens and puts his life in danger.

Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah (the Islamic Group) said in a statement sent to an international news agency that it was responding to a report by Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman's U.S. lawyers on Friday that the cleric's health was deteriorating.

"The Gamaa promises God to exert everything in its power to emancipate the sheikh from the American infidel prison. In the event that something harmful happens to the sheikh — God forbid — and puts his life in danger, then the Gamaa will target — with God's help and power — all Americans who contributed to putting his life in danger," it said.

"Sharia (Islamic law) stipulates that if a group of people conspire to kill a man, they should all be killed themselves, no matter how many of them, that is if they are Muslims."

"In the case they were infidel fighters, and this applies to the Americans, then they would get priority," it said.

"The Gamaa in this case would consider every American official, starting with the American president and ending with the prison warden, and in between the court authority which handed down the unjust sentence on the sheikh — all of them will be considered accomplices in endangering his life."

A U.S. court in 1995 convicted Sheikh Abdul Rahman and nine others of conspiracy to carry out acts including blowing up the United Nations, other New York city landmarks and plans to kill political leaders including Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

"But we cannot simply watch the situation while the power vacuum in northern Iraq helps the terrorists," he added.

"We have a bot pursuit agreement with Iraq and we also respect Iraq's territorial integrity," Mr. Tayan said, without elaborating.

It was not immediately clear if Turkey had secretly renewed a 1986 accord with Baghdad under which Turkish troops could enter northern Iraq to hunt down the PKK. The agreement expired in 1990.

In the last few weeks, Turkey has been deploying additional troops and equip-

ment on its southeast border with Iraq, raising expectations of a military campaign inside northern Iraq.

Turkey complains that the PKK, which has bases and camps in northern Iraq, has flourished near the Turkish border after Baghdad lost control of the area after the 1991 Gulf war, attacking Turkish targets after infiltrating the country.

In the last few years, the Turkish army has been frequently entering northern Iraq in small units to fight the PKK there.

In the largest incursion, nearly 35,000 Turkish troops, supported by tanks and

aircraft, entered northern Iraq in March 1995 and stayed there for six weeks.

"Our determined fight with terrorism will continue until the time terrorism effectively disappears," Mr. Tayan said.

More than 24,000 people have been killed in PKK-related violence in rebels launched their armed campaign for a Kurdish homeland.

Government officials said on Thursday that more than 750 PKK rebels and 73 members of the security forces had been killed in the southeast in the first four months of this year.

## Turkish-Kurdish violence kills 42 rebels, 7 soldiers

DIYARBAKIR (AFP) — Turkish security forces have killed 42 Kurdish separatists and lost seven members in the last three days of violent clashes in the troubled southeast, government officials said.

In a related development, Defence Minister Turhan Tayan said Turkish troops could enter northern Iraq to hunt down rebels as part of a hot pursuit agreement with Baghdad.

Government troops have killed 23 members of the separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) in fighting in the mountainous province of Sirnak near the

Iraqi border since Thursday, the southeast's regional governor said here in a statement.

Three pro-government Kurdish village guards were also killed in the ongoing clash in which the troops were supported by military helicopters and aircraft, it said.

Nineteen other PKK members and four troops were killed in fighting in the provinces of Siirt, Batman and Hakkari.

"We have taken all necessary measures on our territory against separatist terrorists," Mr. Tayan told reporters here, referring to the PKK.

## C8LUMN

Japanese princess may be pregnant

TOKYO (AFP) — The Japanese media insistence that Japan's Princess Masako is pregnant and is drowning out official denials by the Imperial Household Agency.

"Congratulations Princess Masako!" the Shukan Josei women's weekly magazine printed on the cover of its latest edition over a picture of the 33-year-old princess who married Crown Prince Naruhito.

The magazine, which regularly carries such rumours, devoted several pages to speculation over the princess' marital condition in its May 6 edition.

General News Weekly Shukan Shincho in an earlier edition quoted "a source very close to Masako" as saying, "we are waiting for good news soon."

The princess, a former diplomat, has reportedly been indisposed on several occasions since December, suffering from chills which made her miss a dinner hosted by Emperor Akihito during German President Roman Herzog's visit.

Liam Neeson may be 'too heterosexual' to play Oscar Wilde

LONDON (AFP) — In a rare twist to the battle against discrimination for sexual preferences, Irish actor Liam Neeson, has been slammed as "too heterosexual" for the role of the flamboyantly gay writer Oscar Wilde that he has been cast in.

"He is a big heterosexual man and it simply doesn't add up," Oscar Wilde Society Spokesman Andy McDonnell told the Sunday Telegraph of the Irish star of the Hollywood films "Schindler's List" and "Michael Collins."

The new film is one of a spate of movies, books and stage plays planned this year to commemorate Wilde's release from prison 100 years ago.

Neeson has said in the past that Wilde is one of his heroes but added that he did not want to act in any homosexual sex scenes.

Michael Jackson visits agent in German prison

MUNICH (AFP) — Michael Jackson visited his friend and concert organiser Marcel Avram in a Munich prison Saturday, the regional Justice Ministry said.

The 30-minute meeting took place during regular visiting hours. However Jackson was brought to the jail under police protection in a mini-bus with tinted windows.

Avram, 59, a German of Romanian origin, has been in prison for a month on charges of financial fraud worth around eight million Deutschmarks (\$4.8 million). His agency is nevertheless continuing to organise Jackson's Germany tour, to begin on May 31.

One in four Japanese teens drinks monthly

TOKYO (AFP) — Drinking is common among Japanese teenagers, one in four of whom admit to having alcoholic drinks at least once a month, according to a survey by the Health and Welfare Ministry.

About 26 per cent of those polled, aged between 13 and 18, said they drank once or twice a month, while eight per cent, or nearly one in 12, drank at least once a week.

The weekly drinkers made up 15 per cent of boys polled, and seven per cent of girls. Some 36 per cent said they only drank once or twice a year. The survey is the first of its kind.